# THE BONDAGE OF BALLINGER

*by*

ROSWELL FIELD



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Ballinger
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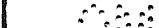
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# *The Bondage of Ballinger*





## By ROSWELL FIELD

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THE PASSING OF MOTHER'S PORTRAIT. Grey boards, red cloth back, size 8 x 5½, pp. 63. Price, 75c.

As idyllic as the joy of that moment when a man feels for the first time that the little old lady whose hand he holds is sweeter than rose-tinted and fragrant youth—because she is his mother.

—*Chicago Daily News.*

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THE ROMANCE OF AN OLD FOOL. Boards, size 8¾ x 6, pp. 144. Price, $1.25.

A book which must have a lasting charm; one to cherish, and to turn to in pleasant leisure; it offers one the pleasure that belongs to an old classic.

—*Kansas City Star.*



# The Bondage of Ballinger

By

Roswell Field



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## TO GEORGE RECORD PECK

FRIEND, SCHOLAR, BOOKMAN

What renegades would blush to own the stamp
Of pleasing slavery to the evening lamp?
Or boast that in their treachery they took
The bookman from the bondage of his book?
Their blustering we flout, their acts contemn;
Such knaves are not for us, nor we for them.
With you, Erasmus, have we joined our oaths:
First the Greek authors, then, perhaps, some clothes!

THE rambling house, with its chain of gables, its old-fashioned windows, and its covered passageway leading back to the woodshed and the row of outer buildings, was known for many years, and is still known, for anything that has been certified to the contrary, as the parsonage. In the summer-time the honeysuckle and the clematis spread and bloom over the porches, as if apologizing for the disappearance of the paint that once was the free offering of the parish, and up the little back passage the nasturtium and morning-glory climb and cluster, briskly doing their share in the work of hiding the ruins of former splendor. Their fragrance dissipates the musty scent that steals from the battered boards, and is likened respectfully to the odor of sanctity with which the premises have been so long invested. But when the blossoms have blown across the road, and the fall rains have come and gone, and the New

England winter has set in, the snow drifts furiously around the parsonage, and piles itself over the porches and up to the lower windows; while the old house, that has valiantly withstood the storms of nearly two centuries, creaks and groans under the assault, as it stands exposed in its brown ugliness.

Some histories relate that in the days when Englishmen conspired against their king and contended for the godly life and liberty of religious purpose, there was a Giles Ballinger, a stanch Puritan, who fought with Cromwell at Marston Moor, and was ever among the first of those who saw the battle's front and at last drove Prince Rupert back across the Lancashire hills. Again at Naseby and at Dunbar the lusty young Roundhead bore a charmed life, and at Worcester he was in the thick of the fight that shattered the power of the Royalists and sent Charles flying over the sea. This intrepid Giles came often under the eye of "Ironsides," who commended him as "serving with all faithfulness and

honour''; but what became of him afterward no chronicles have distinctly set down. Certain traditions of the Connecticut Valley have it that when Cromwell was no more, and the second Charles came to the throne, Giles fled from England with Goffe and Whalley, and buried himself under an assumed name among the Massachusetts colonists. And there are those who say that he was the sturdiest among the determined men of the new country, and a marvelous fighter, who proved his mettle and experience in the dark hours of the Indian wars and massacres; that after he had grown old in service and in the honor and esteem of his neighbors, he assumed his former name and lived thereafter in peace and prosperity, as mighty for his counsel and wisdom as for his physical prowess.

Whatever of truth may have been in these stories, they are not mentioned in the family records compiled by the Reverend Jabez Ballinger, who occupied the old parsonage forty years later, and who speaks modestly and joyfully of his descent from

"good old Puritan stock." Perhaps it was this very modesty that silenced the Reverend Jabez, for to the good man it might savor of boastfulness that he should parade the military exploits of his ancestors, and dwell with satisfaction on the accomplishment of the sword and deeds of worldly cunning. So he scrupulously contented himself with fighting the Devil as valorously as ever the warlike Giles assailed the forces of the English king, bequeathing the eternal conflict to his son, the Reverend Thaddeus Ballinger, who in turn and the fulness of time handed the spiritual sword and buckler to the Reverend Jacob Ballinger in direct family descent.

Now, the Ballingers, in the exercise of their duties in the colony ministry, did not find time hanging oppressively on their hands, yet with all their obligations, spiritual and social, domestic and parochial, they were a reading clan, a family of bibliophiles, as the word with its somewhat restricted opportunities was understood a century ago. But as a line of clergymen

in a sequestered village, with constantly increasing offices of an arduous and varied type, they laid the foundations of an important library, as it is now regarded, with more attention to godly instruction and pious beneficence than to allurement. The old bookcase, which stood stern and rigid in the corner, contained such notable aids to mental advancement as Law's "Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life," Massillon's "Sermons," Dwight's "Theology," Faber's "View of the Prophecies," and Vincent's "Explicatory Catechism." Added to these were several copies of the holy scriptures in microscopic print, an almost illegible presentation of "The Pilgrim's Progress," and in time, though not without certain troublous misgivings, so secular and dangerous a work as "The British Spy." These were the literary temptations on which the wise and ministerial Ballingers relied to woo their offspring from a pernicious excess of youthful sports and pleasures; and coupled with a judicious and emphatic use of the rod,

this library went far in impressing upon the Ballinger tribe as it grew to manhood and womanhood the beauties and felicity of a home beyond the skies.

Whether any or all of these excellent treatises gave rise in Theophilus Ballinger to a restless and roving spirit cannot be satisfactorily established, yet it is true that as soon as possible, and greatly to the grief and scandal of the Reverend Jacob, he broke away from such excellent environment and started out to "teach school" on his own responsibility. Excellent teacher though he is conceded to have been, the nomadic impulse kept him moving up and down the New England coast until he could fairly say that he had taught in every district from Portland to the tip of Cape Cod. The love of reading and of books had come down from the old minister to the school-teacher, just as it was destined to influence the life of the grandson, and so with all the wanderings and the changes the little library grew until it had reached most respectable dimensions, and was fast

becoming a source of perplexity when the fever of moving returned and the order to strike camp was issued.

Fortunately or unfortunately, as the matter may be considered, the literary taste of the schoolmaster was far more catholic than that of any of his forbears, and while, as every reading person should, he conceded the literary qualities of the ministerial selections, and warmly defended the truth and virtue of their teachings, he did not scruple to go beyond their limitations, even adding such worldly books as would have brought his father and grandfather before the church tribunal. The schoolmaster had also a certain sort of canniness in his dealings with books, and would discourse at great length to his son Thomas in appreciation of the value of an autograph or inscribed sentiment in a good book. And having enlarged with enthusiasm on the virtue of the reading habit, he would usually conclude with some such wholesome admonition as this:

"Thomas, in the general reckoning, you

have fifty good years ahead of you. Think of that, my boy! Fifty glorious years for collecting and reading books! Now is the time to begin the accumulation of those delights which will be a blessing to your fading days and a never-failing source of gratification as a connecting link with the past. But in all your transactions, my son, remember this: never, even for the sake of financial profit later in life, lumber up your shelves with what is trashy and worthless. Never wittingly buy an inferior book. But when a poet, or a historian, or a story-writer, or an essayist of your acquaintance, puts forth a venture well worth the while, approach him with modesty and deference, and ask him to be so good as to bring it a little nearer home to you by writing his name, with possibly a fitting sentiment, on the fly-leaf. Then twenty, thirty, even forty years hence, perhaps long after he has gone to rest, full of honor and good works, that book, with its mute testimony of friendship, will bring you such happiness and pleasant thoughts

as your present youth cannot conceive. Incidentally, my son—though this is the very last and most unworthy consideration—that faded first edition, with its inscription and autograph, may prove a very present help in time of trouble."

To this paternal admonition young Thomas listened with respectful attention and with evidence of shrewd understanding, and as he was a seriously minded youth, with an inherited liking for books and a proper appreciation of a great man, he took full advantage of the opportunities which the family wanderings presented, and cultivated literature in the flesh as well as in the spirit, and by candle-light. So it came about that long before the schoolmaster yielded to the rigors of the New England climate, Thomas had built up a distinguished patronage of his own and had agreeably profited by the counsels of his wise father. In this he was aided by the democratic spirit of the time and the smallness of the communities, to say nothing of a quiet and not disagreeable persistence,

which amused the celebrities with whom he came in contact. He could say with truth as well as pride that he had walked and talked with Mr. Emerson—rather timidly perhaps—and had assisted that great man in minor duties of a domestic nature. He had plucked the hem of Miss Fuller's gown, and on more than one occasion had paid himself the compliment of carrying her parcels. For such distinguished services he had several pages of manuscript, duly signed, to show. He had permitted Mr. Thoreau to accept him as a companion on certain notable excursions, and had discussed with him various topics of natural history. He had formed the acquaintance of Mr. Channing, with difficulty, but contrived to profit by such association in the customary channels. He had tapped maple-trees with Mr. Alcott, and indulged in polite but fragmentary discourse with the abstracted Mr. Hawthorne through the picket fence. He had stood on the bridge, and at sundry other places, with Mr. Longfellow, run on occasional errands for Mr.

Lowell, and acquired an almost convivial familiarity with Dr. Holmes. He knew the gentle Mr. Whittier and loved him, was the devoted boyish champion of Lucy Larcom, and would have buffeted the waves far across to the Isles of Shoals had it been necessary in order to reach Celia Thaxter.

In all these youthful adventures he never forgot the paternal advice, and as he was a bright-faced boy, with an alert mind, and a shrewd but respectful insistence, he soon added materially to his library and to the value of his possessions. The young collector was happily not content with the mere pleasure of acquisition, but eagerly devoured every book that came into his possession with an interest considerably sharpened by his personal acquaintance with its author. In this he soon verified the predictions of the father. But if Thomas Ballinger was a student, he gave very little indication of the practical benefit of his reading, for in all the busy circle of shrewd, restless, energetic inhabitants

of the New England village, none was so incapable of action as the schoolmaster's son. If sent on an errand, he might be found thirty minutes later curled up in a corner of the fence, reading the book he surreptitiously carried in his pocket or inside his shirt. If sent to drive home the cow, the cow, weary of waiting, came home without him. Had he been told to run for the doctor he would have considered his mission accomplished if he ran toward the doctor's. Any incidental diversion or distraction of a literary nature was enough to obliterate the object in view. The schoolmaster himself was obliged to confess that, so far as indications served, Thomas was cut out for a failure, while the townspeople ranked him in the list of impossibilities, and held him up to their own children as a terrifying example of shiftlessness.

As the smallness of the family purse demanded that there should be no gentleman boarder in the household, Master Tom was informed that he was now at an age

when he must contribute to the general fund, and it was furthermore hinted that he might choose among the various means of livelihood in the village. And as any kind of hard manual labor was repugnant to his disposition, he expressed an unwillingness to decide so important a question for himself; accordingly he was apprenticed to the blacksmith, and he lasted two days. In turn, and with amazing celerity, he was unloaded on the apothecary, the grocer, the carpenter, the wheelwright, and every trade functionary in the township, but in each case the beneficiary reported with equal promptness that he "guessed Tom 'd better try suthin' else." Then in a glimmer of hope that he might be able to impart to others some of the book knowledge he appeared to be constantly acquiring, the schoolmaster procured his appointment to the pedagogue's chair in a district school. But the scholars soon perceived his weakness, and cunningly drawing him into controversies on literary topics, so disposed of the school hours that the curricu-

lum was practically neglected. And one day, when he had failed to report at nine o'clock, and the hours crept on to ten, and then to eleven, two of the older scholars were sent to investigate, and they found Master Tom comfortably propped up in bed, his nose dipping into a book and his mind revelling in flights wholly unconnected with his paid professional duties. This was too much for the board of trustees sitting on Tom as a delinquent, and he was dismissed with as much disgrace as so preoccupied a culprit could take upon himself.

So in desperation the father laid the case before the young man, reviewed the circumstances leading up to the present problem, and hinted with delicate irony that if he had any preference in the way of a vocation it would simplify matters amazingly to mention it. Young Thomas replied with much sincerity of feeling. He admitted his shortcomings with winning candor and freely attested the efforts that had been made in his behalf. He confessed that a studious life in his quiet home was very

much to his taste, and that he could live on indefinitely without desiring to change it, but since that was impossible under existing conditions, and since it had been declared necessary that he should take up the burdens of human existence, he believed that the lot of a printer would present the fewest serious obstacles. Whereupon the father, overjoyed by any suggestion, and dazzled by this ray of encouragement, sent him off to Boston to the printing-shop of an old friend.

The unexpected happened when Tom took handily to his trade, and in a short time won the praise of his master, who had accepted him with misgivings through the rumors of early experiences and failures, for it seemed to the youth that there was a close, even holy, association of his books with the types he fingered so deftly, and with every thousand ems he would think, not of the commercial rate of wages, but of the time when perhaps a whole book might be set up by his hand, a book that he might love and cherish and point to as,

in a way, his contribution to lasting literature. Of these things he ventured at times to speak to the old printer, and that sagacious task-master humored his fancy, and beguiled him with airy tales of the tremendous possibilities of his art, so that Tom was spurred on to work the more diligently and to study the forms and devices of printing more closely. However, as his earnings went systematically toward the purchase of more books, and as he was consequently in arrears in the disposition of numerous bills for food, clothes, and other luxuries, demanded even by incipient bibliomania, his family and village friends continued to shake their heads ominously and reaffirm their former fears.

It is the generous dispensation of Providence that, whatever our failings, and however we may grieve and disappoint those who are near to us and who are ambitious for our welfare and success, there is always one who believes in us, whose faith endures through all trials, and whose confidence is preserved in every series of disas-

ters. And this reservation certainly could not fail when a handsome young fellow is the illustration in point, and when memories of chivalrous gentleness are constantly arising to combat the tongues of prejudice. In the early school-days, in the crab-apple time of youth, a little girl had peeped shyly at Tom from the benches just across the aisle—a little girl in a gray pinafore and white apron, a grave little girl with big eyes and pink cheeks and a funny little nose, and with two severe braids of chestnut hair hanging stiffly down her back. And when the boys tormented her, as boys will, and laughed at the garb of her faith, and at her "thee" and "thou," Tom was her champion and defender. The chivalry that was in the boy was perhaps increased by the stories his father had told and read to him, and whenever he bore down to rescue the little maid from her tormentors, he fancied that she was a princess in distress and he her sworn knight. He would be Launcelot or Roland or Ivanhoe, as his humor directed, and he con-

structed a wonderful cave to which he carried her after a royal battle, although she knew nothing either of his conceit or of his names, and only looked gratefully and wonderingly at him with her big eyes, and believed him to be the most valiant and the most remarkable of all small boys. When they went home together in the sunlight of the afternoon, they raced down the long lane that led from the school-house, and stopped to watch the shiners in the brook or hunt for luck emblems in the clover patch. And as the years went by, and the little girl's skirts grew longer, as her hair apparently grew shorter, while the ridiculous small nose began to assume the proportions intended by nature, the tint deepened in her cheeks when Tom's name was mentioned, and her childish fancy was more than ever her hero and ideal.

If Tom came home at Thanksgiving, or during the Christmas holidays, or for an occasional Sunday, he divided his time impartially between the little cottage at the top of the hill and Ephraim Playfair's more

pretentious home in the outskirts of the village. And if sweet Hannah Playfair's eyes were a little brighter at these times, and if smiles played more frequently around her demure mouth and lighted up her grave face, only the rascal Tom knew the secret. For Friend Ephraim, though a just man, was stern and unyielding, and looked with little favor on the visits of the youth not of his faith and giving no promise of a profitable career. Long and solemnly he discoursed to Hannah on the evils of unguarded associations, and bade her steel herself against the impulsive dictates of a foolish heart. And Hannah listened and sighed and fought against nature as her father commanded. Yet Tom was no less eloquent and persuasive in his own way and pleaded his cause so successfully that the words of Ephraim were forgotten in the greater joy and hope; so these two kept their own counsel and lived their love life in themselves, though what plans they made, or what plots they devised, it would be an insult to true love to detail.

But one night—and all the village knew that Tom was going back to the city on the late train—little Hannah was graver than usual, and when at nine o'clock her father shut the Bible before the evening prayer, she came and knelt at his side, and put her head on his shoulder. And after prayer she restrained him, and threw her arms about his neck, and pressed her cheek to his, and smoothed his silvery hair, and petted him, while the tears stood in her eyes and her voice trembled as she spoke. So Ephraim went to bed little wondering, for he was a dull man as well as a just and stern and unyielding, and not until morning did the light break in upon him, when Hannah did not respond to his call, and when investigation showed her room empty, her bed undisturbed, and a letter addressed "To Father" pinned on the old-fashioned mirror. Ephraim read it laboriously:

Honoured Sir:

If I have gone contrary to thy wishes, and in forgetfulness of thy great goodness, I pray thee to think kindly of thy little Hannah and to remember that she loves thee now as always. By the time that thee

has read this letter I shall be married to Thomas, who truly loves thee and would be an affectionate and dutiful son. If we may return to ask thy forgiveness, and to implore thy blessing, let us know this proof of thy kindness. But if the great sorrow comes to my happiness that we may not be forgiven, and that thy heart is hard against thy little daughter, give me leave to keep on loving thee and blessing thee for thy never-failing love and tenderness.

I am, honoured sir, so long as life shall last,
Thy true and devoted daughter,
HANNAH.

Then Ephraim Playfair, a dull man, and a stern but just man, felt a little tugging at his heart, and a choking in the throat, and while the impulse was yet on him he sat down and wrote simply: "Thee may return to thy father." So Hannah came back to the village, with its quiet streets of shade elms and its routine of droning life she had for the first time put behind her, and it seemed to her as if she had lived many years in the few hours that had passed since Thomas came and took her away to the bustle and roar of the strange life. She went on down the street to the old house with the wide porch, where

Ephraim Playfair sat with her letter in his hand. Her heart smote her as she saw him, but she ran quickly up to him, with her cheeks burning and a half-merry look in her eyes, and drew his face down to hers and kissed him. He said gravely:

"Thee acted hastily, Hannah."

"Nay, father," replied the girl, roguishly, "how could one whom thee has trained act hastily? We acted only after much consideration and argument."

"Still I think," went on the old man, ignoring the correction, "that thee will live to repent thy choice, for Thomas is but an ill mate for any woman. Thee has taken him for better or worse, for richer or poorer, and I fear thee will find thy lot both worse and poorer."

But little Hannah only kissed the old man more tenderly, and looking shyly into his face, said softly, "Then, father, I must only endure the more patiently my fate and remember the good words thee has taught me from my youth up, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' "

THOMAS BALLINGER began his honeymoon characteristically. In the flush of early love and the excitement of approaching marriage he had managed to save money sufficient to pay incidental wedding expenses and to allow for a bridal trip not to exceed a fortnight, an evidence of economy and thrift of which he was duly proud, and at which everybody wondered. In the late hours of the morning, after the ceremony at the clergyman's house, and a reasonably sumptuous breakfast at a convenient restaurant, Thomas had sallied forth to procure the railway tickets and to make such other arrangements as were necessary in the absence of a next friend. It was his evil genius, that malevolent spirit which rarely left him, that led him down a street and past a house where a conspicuous sign announced a book auction. Thomas hesitated, and was lost. He ran his hand down in his pocket, and thus communed with the evil spirit:

"Have I not plenty of time before proceeding to the ticket office? Can any harm result from just dropping in to see who is there and what is going on? Am I not a married man, with a married man's responsibilities, and has not my life of two months fully demonstrated that I am thoroughly emancipated from the thralldom of bibliomania? It would be an unpardonable sign of weakness to confess that I am not brave enough to show my hearty contempt for the follies of which I have been so long guilty. I will approach without fear. I will walk through the rooms that those of my acquaintance who happen to be there may see how little these temptations affect me."

Thomas confessed afterward that he had a very hazy idea of what happened and how it came about. He remembered telling the auctioneer to send the books to his boarding-house, giving a due-bill for several dollars in addition to all the money in his wallet, and walking back to his bride, very much bewildered and very much ashamed.

But Hannah took the matter philosophically and bravely. "Thee knows, Thomas," she said, "that the journey was but a foolish one, and that it is much better that we should begin our life with work and not with play. And doubtless thee will need the books in thy business, dear, and they will be pleasant to look at in after years, when we reflect that they saved us from such silly extravagance and useless travel. Surely it was thy good angel, Thomas, and not thy evil genius as thee has said."

Ah, sweet, beguiling, thoughtless little Hannah! How could you know what trouble you were storing up, and what a floodgate of unhappy desire and evil yearning you were opening? How could you guess that the same little imp of acquisition your gentleness forgave would become a mighty monster to follow and plague you through life?

So Thomas went humbly back to his trade and Hannah departed to make the peace with Ephraim Playfair. And when she returned they lived together in happi-

ness and comfort, for Thomas was a clever and a rapid workman, and made great wages for those days. But the restless blood of his father was in his veins, and many times he sighed for the outside world he had encountered only in his books, and had pictured so fondly in his fancy. And one day, when the longing was strong within him, he came back suddenly from the office and said, "Come, Hannah, I must take thee on thy wedding journey." Thomas loved the quaint, solemn speech of the Quakers, and often spoke to his wife in the manner of her father's house. And Hannah, reassured by his smile and cheerfulness, though divining that a great change was coming into their life, smiled back at him, and holding up her fingers playfully to mark the signs of quotation, answered, "Whither thou goest I will go."

To so capable a printer and steady a workman as Thomas it mattered little in what city he found his occupation, and in New York he took up his trade as easily

as he had laid it down in Boston. The fascinations of the larger town appealed to the young wife, and often, when Thomas's work was done, they would roam together up and down the streets, looking into the gay windows and planning how they might have a home and how they should enrich and beautify it. Then the tempter, never far from Thomas's side, would beset him with all the cunning of his devilish art, and the poor printer would weakly steal away by himself, and haunt the old bookshops, and many a dollar solemnly pledged to the coming home found its way into the bookseller's till. Already a feeling of dread had taken possession of the thrifty little wife, and with each fresh purchase of books her heart would leap and words of reproach would come to her lips. And then she would remember how kind and gentle was Thomas, and her mind would go back swiftly to the old days when they were children, and to the time when he shielded her from all the simple griefs of childhood, and the gratitude for the past

and the love of the present drove away all remonstrance and killed the words that rose in reproof.

It pleased her, even in moments of loneliness and fear, to know that Thomas had gained a reputation and a standing among wise men of books and letters; that he was sought out for the value of his opinions and for the extent of his knowledge; and when poets and romancists came to their rooms to talk with Thomas of his possessions, and to speak to him of the giants he had met in boyhood, her foolish little heart would swell with rapture, and she would wonder how so learned and great a man could have been attracted to so weak and insignificant a woman. Thomas Ballinger was not the first hero in this pleasant humbug of a world who has blossomed into greatness through the memory of some childish chivalrous deed or the magnified recollection of a sympathetic word. And, haplessly, all heroes, wife-made, do not have his gentleness and amiability to speak in extenuation of the delusion.

Again the restlessness of spirit stirred Thomas, and again he wearied of his environment, and the round of drudging duties. He said to Hannah: "Our life is monotonous and changeless, and we have no chance to know the world that is so beautiful. We are wasting ourselves and our opportunities. The city is so great, so sordid, so given over to the roar of commerce and the pursuit of money, that every noble impulse is crushed and every better feeling is repressed." He took Hannah's hand, just as he had taken it in the happy days of early love, and he smiled that same old persuasive, irresistible smile as he added: "Come, Hannah, let us renew our wedding journey. Thee will find how much of the old lover is left in me. Let us go to the South, where we can be young and foolish once more, where everything is new and everybody is strange, and where sweethearts, like thee and me, Hannah, find fresh inspiration for their love."

Hannah listened rapturously, for she was

still young and foolish, and she believed in Thomas and trusted in his great wisdom. And as the tears came to her eyes at the gentleness of his voice and the reminder of the old days she answered: "Let us go, Thomas"—and then, with a little blush at her own boldness—"let us go where there are no book-stores, dear."

So they journeyed southward, lingering now a week, now a month, in cities and towns, while Thomas, pursuing his trade, made money necessary not only for their expenses, but for the accumulation of literature. The beginning of the second winter found them in the loveliest of spots, the land of perpetual summer, a fair town, where the people lived in the laziness of dreamland, a land green with the palmetto and the magnolia, where the birds sang all the year, the roses bloomed perpetually, and the breezes languidly waved the moss on the old trees and barely stirred the ripple of the sparkling river. Here Thomas worked diligently and saved sums of money for the future, and here Hannah found the

realization of her dreams of a honeymoon in the hours they spent together. It seemed to her that they had come at last into life and happiness that must never end, and great was her sorrow when one night, wandering home along the river-bank, Thomas said:

"Hannah, I have bought the tickets, we must go to-morrow."

She clutched his arm nervously as she asked: "Why must we go to-morrow, or the next day? Where can we find so beautiful a home as this? We left behind us the ice and snow I dreaded, and the great cities that so displeased thee, and we have come here to find everything that speaks for the life we love. Why must we go?"

Thomas turned away his head and did not answer. She touched his arm again, and said, "Have we not been very happy, dear?"

"Yes, very happy, but—"

"There is no 'but' in my happiness, Thomas."

"I was going to say, Hannah, that you do not understand. In fact, you see—you know—I was going to say—"

"Well, Thomas?"

He laughed, guiltily. Then he drew her toward him and kissed her. "I know I am asking thee to make a great sacrifice," he went on, falling into the speech she loved, "but if thee only knew how I have suffered here, thee would not blame me, Hannah."

"Suffered, Thomas?"

"Yes, suffered, dear heart. Has thee not seen how bitterly I have been disappointed, and how all my expectations have been deceived?"

She looked up at him wonderingly. "Thee has been disappointed? Am I not as much to thee—"

At this he laughed again. "Thee is and has been everything to me, foolish child, and without thee I should have died of desperation, but the truth is—"

"Well, Thomas?"

"The truth is," he went on, forcing out

the words, "there is not a decent book-store in the county, or for that matter, in the country."

The tired look crept back into the patient eyes, and a sigh came up from the anxious heart as little Hannah clung a little closer to her husband.

"Let us go where thee will, dear."

Westward they went, on through the pleasant Southland, with its wealth of foliage and blossoms, its waving palms and bewildering masses of flowers, ever beckoning to them and inviting them to stay. And Hannah would have remained, for she loved the gentle climate and the profusion of nature, and the kindly people of soft speech and gracious manner, but the restlessness of a feverish spirit was in Thomas, and he loitered only until he had acquired the means of further travel. And so they wandered until they came to the great river which divides the continent. And lingering a space as emergency demanded they journeyed on where the mountains rise thousands of feet above the plains and

wear eternal snow on their peaks. And then across the desert of sand to where the mountains rise again, and so down the slope into the golden country of warmth and sunshine. The months had crept into years; the lines had deepened in Thomas's face, and the silvery threads were shining in Hannah's brown hair, but no word of complaint came from her lips and no feeling of reproach was in her heart. The living had been precarious, the wanderings had been long, and the halts many, but the two grown-up children held to each other —the one because he had learned in his vacillation and weakness to lean on a better and braver spirit, the other because she loved and was strong.

Standing on the cliff that looked over the western ocean, Thomas, in a wave of remorse that periodically overwhelmed him, and mindful of his failings and his failures, said ruefully:

"Your father was right, Hannah. You took me for poorer and for worse. I have done nothing that I should have done,

everything that I should not have done. You have followed me faithfully and loyally, but fruitlessly, from ocean to ocean. I wonder why you have loved me and stood by me all these years."

Then Hannah, her maiden dreams dispelled and her hopes dimmed, but her faith and courage strong and high, replied:

"We do not always know why we love, Thomas, or why we are constant. It is not given to a woman to argue such things or to explain them by any exact rule of science. In truth, I would not wish to ask myself why I love thee, or what thee has done either to hold or to forfeit my love. It is enough for me to know that I love, and that I have always loved since we were children far off yonder."

The memory of those days rushed back and she choked in her speech. But Thomas had already forgotten her, for a great ship had passed out of the golden gate and was spreading its wings for the eager flight. "See, Hannah," he cried, "what a glorious thing it would be—" and

he stopped suddenly, for his thoughts were on the speeding vessel and the waters and the distant shores beyond.

Hannah smiled and laid her hand upon his arm. "I know what is in thy heart, Thomas, and how gladly thee would go with me across the water."

"Think of the new world that would open up to us, Hannah. Think of the treasures that we should see and that might be ours. In a few weeks, or months at the latest, I shall be able to save the money for our passage and we shall go into new lands and realize all our dreams."

Then Hannah smiled again, but sadly. "I have no dreams to realize, dear. Is it not sufficient that we are growing old in our wandering, and that we have come to our country's end? Must our wedding journey go on forever?"

When Thomas reddened at this thrust she repented in the delicacy of her nature, and said softly:

"It will go on forever, dear, for thee is always a lover to me, and our journey is

in love. But," she added, roguishly, "thee has not exhausted our country's resources, Thomas; thee has not bought all the books."

He laughed at this. "These books are not all my offending, Hannah. I wish I could think they are, for I have been selfish and mindful only of my own wishes. But I am going to begin again, and in earnest. Hereafter for every book you shall have a forfeit. Better than this, I shall buy no more books. From this moment I am emancipated from the slavery that has made you suffer so much."

Still with that same patient, gentle smile she replied: "I would not ask thee, dear, to do this for my happiness or thy wretchedness. We must take our lives as they come to us. We may not wholly destroy the impulse that is strong, or chafe under the desires we cannot kill. But we may take our life more gently, dear. We may find a home where our wandering may end and where we may enjoy in peace and rest the things that are precious to us."

"May we not find such a home across the water, Hannah? How often have we talked of the distant land where life is one long and pleasant summer, where there are no cares, no troubles, and where everything that we have left in the sunny country you loved so much is intensified a hundred-fold."

She shook her head. "Would such a land hold thee, Thomas? It seems fair and pleasant now, as was the country we deserted, but would it last? Should we not be wandering again, always wandering, in search of the happiness that lies just beyond. Should we not find that we are deceived in this as we have been deceived all these years. Is there any happiness beyond the contentment of our own minds, dear?"

He said quietly, though his eyes still gazed far over the placid ocean: "Shall we go back, Hannah, back through the desert and over the mountains, away from all this summer and warmth and luxuriance of nature?"

She looked at him, and the flush came to her face and the light to her eyes. "Let us go back," she said.

"But," he urged, "the journey is long and difficult, nothing is ahead of us to stimulate our hopes and excite our ambitions, and we are very poor."

"Was the journey short and were we rich when we came, dear?"

"Our parents are dead, and our friends are scattered, Hannah. The years have brought changes to our village as well as to us. We shall be known to few, and all will be so different. Is it not a risk that we should avoid?"

"Is it not our home, Thomas? Let us go back."

"And the temptations, Hannah?" He thought of what she had said and he was wavering. "You know my weakness, dear, and it is a land of books."

She laid her head on his shoulder and turned her face that he might not see her smile. And she answered simply:

"Let us go back."

IF the sunlight had danced less merrily on the waves of the great lake as they rolled in to the western shore, if the changing tints of gray, blue, and green, far to the north, south, and east, had been less fascinating to Thomas Ballinger and less restful to Hannah, perhaps they might not have lingered in the smoky, grimy city with its rushing tide of money-seekers and fortune-builders. They had come slowly across the desert and mountains and prairie, and had stopped again to take breath and acquire the means of journeying. And if Thomas could have looked into the mysterious book which holds the future, and turned to the page which bears his name, he would have seen that fate decreed that his wanderings were over and that he had come at last to his inheritance, poor, small, and uncertain though it might be.

But the one thing that never entered into Thomas's calculations was the future,

and he was accustomed to argue that the man who is ever bothering his poor brain with problems of what may happen by and by is wholly insensible to the delights of the present. It might have been retorted by Hannah, or other members of the family entitled to speak, that he who is absorbed in the joys of the present is laying up more than his share of trouble for the future, but such replies he would have dismissed not only as discourteous, but as entirely foreign to the question. Yet in spite of his disinclination to consider the various periods of time, Thomas acknowledged that work must be accepted as a factor in the argument, viewed from any standpoint, and work he found immediately, and friends, and good wages, and far uptown in a quiet street near the water's edge he established Hannah in a little house, where the vines grew up and around the windows, and where through the looping wistaria and honeysuckle she could look out on the rolling waves.

During the months of journeying Thomas

had stood manfully to his resolution and had resisted the occasional temptation that came in his way, for the country was new and the books either newer or just old and indifferent enough to be valueless. Even after he had settled down in the great city, and had soberly furnished the house for Hannah, he gave many indications of the cure of his folly, and with just pride and exultation he would dwell on this achievement as significant of what any man may do if he has the power of will and strength of character. And one day, the conversation turning on the influence of habit, he said to Hannah:

"I am tempted to laugh at myself when I think how, even temporarily, I was drawn into a habit which with some persons might pass for extravagance. By nature I am a prudent and a saving man, and if in the years I am speaking of I permitted myself to indulge luxuriously in things which showed no immediate profit on the investment, I think we may both say that the temporary dissipation only

emphasized and drew out my innate caution. In like manner economy has become with me now a fixed habit, and the desire to save is as strong as the former wish to spend. At the same time there is danger that we may carry our principle too far, and that we may eventually become as sordid and commercial as our neighbors, Hannah. You see in them what atmosphere and environment can do in the way of stifling all the better emotions. And the same criticism may be applied to us. I was humiliated enough to-day, when I discovered that I positively have sixty-five dollars in the bank.''

Thomas did not permit this humiliation to plague him for any length of time, and presently huge boxes of freight began to arrive from distant points in the east, west, and south, the results of investments in former days, safely sealed and housed until the period of wandering should pass. And with each fresh arrival Hannah would sigh and Betty, the cook and general superintendent—Thomas's tribute to temporary

prosperity—would protest and threaten, and give notices ranging from five minutes to thirty days, for Betty was autocratic and explosive, and Thomas admitted, returning home at night, that unless she announced her impending departure, he felt that the routine of his life was fractured and that something gently stimulating was missing. Presently the cottage began to overflow. Books filled the small parlor, lapped over into the hall, and crept into the dining-room. The three bedrooms were plentifully supplied with reading matter of all kinds, and Betty, who could be sarcastic, in phraseology inelegant but forceful, suggested that some shelves might be put up back of the kitchen stove, and that there was still a little room in the pantry and refrigerator. Even Hannah, whose gentle nature would not customarily permit her to indulge in levity which carried a sting, was heard to say, confidentially, that it would help the situation not a little if some inventive genius would construct a combination bookcase and dining-room

table. These amiable reflections, however, were lost on Thomas, whose ideas in the matter of domestic economy were not very profound, and to whom the subject was one of the utmost simplicity. For inasmuch as there was a large variety of books and very little of anything else, it followed that the books must have the space. That was as plain as the proverbial pikestaff.

On the second floor, back in the northeast corner, was the room which passed in the family order as the den, and here Thomas conveyed his most precious belongings, first editions of the New England school of poetry and romance, inscribed and autographed letters, notes, photographs, maps, manuscript, and all the associations of earlier days, presentation copies, and limited editions from every section of the country through which he had traveled —a tribute, as he said, to his thrift and foresight. Here also was the table on which he proposed to write his recollections when old age justified them—a table

thought to have been associated with the Concord school of philosophy—and here was the reading-chair in which tradition had it Mr. Emerson and Mr. Thoreau had alternately sat during periods of disputation. Other souvenirs, practical and ornamental, contributed to the peculiar atmosphere of the den, the delights of which were made significant, if not enhanced, by a powerful and pervasive odor of mustiness and stale tobacco smoke.

At Thomas Ballinger's peculiar theories of the proper method of preserving the fascinations of a den Hannah winked and Betty openly sniffed. To him, however, the room was sacred, and it was understood in the family that it should be thoroughly swept and dusted twice a year, and only at such other times as the occupant should specify. But as nothing was further from Thomas's thoughts than the removal of a little coating of dirt and dust, which gave a scholarly air to the surroundings, it came about that the semi-annual invasion of the premises answered all purposes. It

was enough for Thomas that the daily feminine ministrations were confined to the filling of the lamp, for in common with most men of studious habits and modest tastes, he had a profound contempt for a woman's idea of cleaning up, which means the displacement of books, the confusion of papers, and the general upheaval of masculine discipline. It was his boast that he could go to his den at any hour of darkest night and lay his hand on a book or paper which he might desire to consult, and he contrasted this accomplishment with the misery of an improvident woman who never can find anything in her boudoir under a five minutes' search with the aid of all the modern improvements in the way of illumination. How this feat of Thomas's was accomplished it would be difficult to explain, for there are many things in the philosophy of the studious life which are concealed from the wise and prudent of both sexes.

Among other gifts Thomas had inherited from his New England ancestry a certain

knack of carpentering, which, while not perhaps of the most finished art, served excellently for sentimental uses. Observing neighbors in the early days of the den, good people of the unromantic sort, marveled when packages of boards, apparently very old and very much begrimed, arrived by freight and express, and the rumor soon spread that Thomas Ballinger had sent down east for worn-out lumber. Then the story grew that these boards had come from the houses of men famous in the literature of the country, that each board had a literary history and could tell a tale as marvelous as any related at the Wayside Inn if only it could speak. Mrs. Colver, whose prime duty it was to keep the entire neighborhood informed as to the progress of affairs, real and fictitious, and who was supposed to employ an extra maid for no other purpose than to depart at a moment's notice on police or picket duty, declared that she had seen "Concord" painted on one of these boards. And the good lady furthermore stoutly as-

serted, though in the strictest confidence, that on the under side of another board she had been enabled to decipher a "T" and and "e" and an "a," from which she deduced the conclusion that this particular board was at one time the property of Mr. Thoreau. But the lady to whom she communicated this startling and highly reasonable inference objected, on the ground that these cabalistic letters might stand as well for "Texas," so on that point they parted. As for Thomas, he merely smiled and said nothing when his neighbors grew too inquisitive, but Mrs. Colver observed—and spoke of it, too—that he handled each piece very carefully, and even patted it and rubbed it affectionately when he surmised that nobody was looking.

So in his leisure moments he planed and sawed and chiseled, and put together piece on piece, each marked with baffling cryptograms which would have driven the neighbors mad with curiosity could they have seen it. And in time, from this pile of sacred lumber, came forth a bookcase, not

bewildering in its beauty, but strong and sturdy, reaching from one end of the den to the other, and standing six good feet in height. Even the glass doors were fitted and joined by his hand, for Thomas had declared that he would perform this labor of love alone and unaided, and that it should serve as a testimonial to—and there he stopped. Those same neighbors would have given a dollar each to bribe Thomas to finish the sentence, and Mrs. Colver would have subscribed to a much larger sum for the privilege of retailing the news, but his lips were shut. And when they would have dragged the secret from Hannah, she shook her head and smiled and answered, "Thee must ask Thomas."

Diggs the detective lived in the house three doors below. For nearly a generation the fame of Diggs had endured in the memory of his grateful fellow-citizens. He was the terror of wrong-doers and the rock of law-abiding folk. When Diggs was put on a case, however intricate, the community knew that the mystery was as good as

unraveled, and when he consented to express an opinion in the neighborhood, it was immediately accepted as the word of the court of last resort, which nothing could over-ride save an amendment to the constitution. So it was suggested to Diggs, purely in a friendly and neighborly way, that his acknowledged talents might be employed in solving the annoying problem of the bookcase and the story of the lumber. But Diggs was an honorable and grateful man, as detectives go, and flatly refused to betray the friendship and confidence of one who had recognized his professional talents and interests, and had introduced him to the literary delights of Gaboriau and "The Moonstone." "I couldn't do it," said Diggs, waving his hand protestingly; "it would be *particeps criminis* and unprofessional." Diggs spoke in good faith, for he was fond of employing at haphazard, when he desired to speak with decision and extraordinary impressiveness, such Latin phrases and terms as he picked up around the courts. An extraordi-

nary man was Diggs, as will be developed here and there as occasion arises.

When the bookcase was completed, and had been subjected to every critical test the taste and care of Thomas could devise, the question of its contents presented itself. This is a far more serious matter than is apparent to the layman, with his scant knowledge of and casual acquaintance with books, but to Thomas it involved no prolonged consideration, for as a book collector of wisdom and experience, he had that nice discrimination which distinguishes the sentimental bibliophile from the ordinary librarian.

"You do not put old wine into new bottles," he said to Hannah, at the table, when that good woman remarked on the somewhat decrepit character of the volumes he had placed so carefully on the shelves.

"We do not put wine into any kind of bottles, Thomas," replied Hannah, meekly but reproachfully, for though she was acquainted with scriptural metaphor, she was

a prudent housewife and abhorred the thief that steals away men's brains.

"True," said Thomas, apologetically. "Since we must be exact I confess that our wine-cellar exists only in my imagination, so we'll drop that question, if you do not mind. But I meant to say, when I got into the flowers of speech, that there is to everybody something that is a little nearer and dearer than the rest of his possessions, that affords him more sympathetic delight, and it therefore gives him pleasure that that something is appropriately surrounded and guarded and maintained to accord with the sentiment it inspires."

Hannah looked demurely down and smoothed the wrinkles in her faded gown. "And is that the reason I am wearing this old dress?" she asked, innocently enough to be sure.

Thomas smiled at this, though it was a home thrust, but he knew how to disarm the little wife, for in his sentimental moments, and when his conscience reproached him—and a very tender conscience he

had, this foolish, unpractical fellow—he would revert to the Quaker speech and carry all before him. And he went over and put his arm affectionately around her and kissed her. "Nay, Hannah," he said, "thee is not wearing the dress for such a reason, for thee is beautiful to me in any garb, but because thee was foolish enough to marry a brute of a husband who robs thee of all womanish vanities to gratify his own selfish pleasures."

Then Hannah's heart, just as confiding and weak and forgiving as in the years before experience could bring wisdom, came into her throat, and she pressed his hand and asked him to forget her unkind words, declaring that it was her intolerable temper that prompted her to such malicious utterances. And if Thomas received these affectionate assurances without dispute, remember that he was a man, with a man's way of accepting feminine tributes.

"As I was saying," he went on, resuming his seat at the table after the battle had been fought and won, "we hold some

things peculiarly dear because of their association. There is, or should be, a personal side to every library. I need not remind you that I have been collecting books for many years—often without just provocation I admit,'' he added, as he saw a faint smile on Hannah's face—''but while I have tried to be thoughtful and prudent in the main, it cannot be denied that there is as much difference in our love for books as in our affection for children. There are books, as there are children, whom we wish to have constantly at hand. We never tire of fondling them and petting them. They become, first perhaps through admiration, then by close association, a part of our lives, until it seems that our existence is linked with them, and that they have a personal being with which we can communicate.''

Hannah hesitated. She had certain ideas which she might have expressed, but what were the incapable theories of a woman and a wife in combat with the views of a sentimental but wise philosopher?

"It is a beautiful thought, Thomas," she finally ventured submissively.

"Of course," said Thomas, stimulated by such conjugal praise, "there is as much difference in book-collectors as in the books themselves. Nothing is so deserving of scorn as the fellow who fondly imagines that he is a bibliophile, and who buys books at the instigation of his bookseller as a speculator buys grain or stock at the suggestion of his broker. Look at old Hervey, the millionaire, whose library was sold at auction the other day. That library brought thousands of dollars and was full of the rarest literary curiosities, yet Hervey could not have told an Elzevir from the ordinary Latin grammar, or a Kelmscott from a school-book. It was a great day for the emancipation of misplaced volumes when old Hervey passed away."

"I would not say that, Thomas," objected Hannah, mildly.

"It is true, Hannah. These fellows who call themselves book-lovers because they have money with which to put up the

prices and secure all the treasures are a disgrace and a hindrance to the noble guild. What care they for a book except for the fact that it costs so many dollars or hundreds of dollars, and somebody else is clamorous for it? Does the book in itself represent anything to them? Do they ever read it, or take it out of the case and pet it, and glory in the association it brings? Does a first edition bring up to them the joys and hopes and fears and tremblings with which the author, perhaps long famous and long dead, put it forth? Does the autograph of a historian, the handwriting of a philosopher, the written sentiment of a great poet, mean more to them than what it will bring in the market? Are they any nearer to these departed giants because they hold a manuscript which they bought as a speculation? Yet they think they are book-lovers, who are merely book-buyers."

"Thee has a wonderful imagination," interposed Hannah.

"It is imagination that makes for the joy of life," replied Thomas.

"I know that only too well. Thee—" and Hannah stopped, and colored, and shook her head.

"Go on," said Thomas encouragingly.

"Nay, Thomas, I would not say the unkind thing that was in my mind, but thee knows that the money set apart for our supper to-night was spent in thy great wisdom for a book, and that thee has eaten largely of thy imagination, with such help as I in my smaller capacity could give with the means at hand. I know that the book meant much more to thee than our poor supper and I am glad for thy sake. Forgive me, Thomas. I am not complaining if thee is satisfied, dear."

"These domestic illustrations," replied Thomas, much diverted by Hannah's wit and unselfishness, "serve only to bring out my point more clearly. What does it matter that I am eating scraps of yesterday's feast if we are contented, and if they represent to us all the delicacies the palate may crave? But the book, Hannah! Ah, it was a rare bargain. It was going for a

pitiful price to an ignorant fellow, who knew no more of its precious joys than I know of the fifth heaven of Mahomet. It was my duty to rescue so glorious a book from so melancholy a fate, and if I had gone supperless to bed to-night it could not have repressed the joy I feel at my ability to stand an old friend in stead; for I have searched for that book, Hannah, these five years, and just as I despaired of finding it, behold, it comes to my hand for a paltry sum—a book that is worth a hundred suppers."

His enthusiasm communicated itself to his wife—faithful, patient, long-suffering wife—the uncomplaining victim of a grievous malady. "And will thee put it in thy grand bookcase?" she asked.

"Perhaps, and yet I may not. There are associations of books simply as books, and there are again associations of books with the writers whom we have known and loved. You have heard of library ghosts, of pictures that have come down from the walls, of books that have stepped forth

from the shelves to hold literary revel with those who believe in their personality and who receive them trustingly and confide in them implicitly?''

They had passed into the little parlor, and Hannah, half-frightened by her husband's seriousness, drew him down to the sofa and held his hand in hers.

''I do not believe in ghosts of any kind, dear,'' she said, ''and least of all in those that would take thee away from me. If there are such ghosts as thee has described in thy den, Betty and I shall see to it that they are swept away to-morrow.''

''My ghosts will never annoy thee,'' replied Thomas, with a smile, ''for they are gentle ghosts; and remember that thee has said that I have a wonderful imagination. Listen, Hannah; this is what I mean. In the evening, when I am in the den, and thou art sewing in thy room, and Betty has finished her summary of the day and her instructions for the morrow, I turn the key in the great padlock of the bookcase and take out, one by one as memory

suggests, the books I collected when a boy. Small and brown and homely they are, unattractive volumes that the ignorant would pass by unthinkingly, but precious to the wise man and beyond price to him who dwells familiarly with them. For on the leaves are the names of great men long since gone, and sentiments written only for me; and hidden away are letters bringing back a rush of memories, letters wonderful to the boy who read them, and holy to the man who now reads them. And reading here and there, and fondly caressing them, it seems to me that a personality is with me, and that I am again sitting and talking with those who wrote them, and who have come back from a long journey to remain with me for all time. These are my ghosts, Hannah, my gentle, harmless ghosts, whom thee and Betty would sweep away."

Tears stood in Hannah's eyes, for she was always a foolish child, this woman with the gray around the temples, and she answered: "I would not banish thy friendly

ghosts, Thomas, since they bring to thee so much happiness. But tell me, when thee is in the den with thy spirits who lead thee to the past, do they ever call to mind the red school-house, and the clover patch, the summer afternoons, and the long lane leading to the village? Does a little girl ever haunt thy memories?''

And Thomas, with his man's wrinkles and his boy's heart, drew a little nearer to her as he answered: ''No ghost must come from grave or bookcase, dear, to remind me of her or of what she has been to me all these years.''

But Betty, looking in from the kitchen, and seeing them sitting on the sofa, with their arms around each other, said, pityingly:

''Them two children!''

THOMAS BALLINGER had that lordly contempt for money which should characterize the true man of letters. He contended, after admitting that certain sums may be grudgingly expended for the so-called necessities of existence, that the only possible pleasure in money is the immediate disbursement in such honorable ways as the fancy of the possessor may suggest. As for himself, he argued, there could be no doubt of his method of relieving himself of such vexatious belongings, and he defended his conduct by calling attention to his ministerial ancestry, and declaring that a holy horror of the mammon of unrighteousness and the root of all evil had been his lawful inheritance. He illustrated most forcibly and convincingly the perils of money, considered merely as money, and he thanked God with all heartiness that he was free from all intimation of a sordid lust for wealth. It was observed

by his neighbor Diggs, the detective, who, through reason of his calling, was of a prying and suspicious nature, that these invectives against the miserly accumulation of gold invariably preceded a foray on the old bookshops, and it was Diggs who directed Hannah's attention to this coincidence as significant storm signals, and warned her to gain possession of the family purse before it was too late; for it never occurred to Thomas, honest soul, that his frequent outbursts against the possession of tangible coin and notes was nothing less than a compromise with his conscience, that little monitor which keeps knocking at the gate of reason in spite of frequent rebuffs. And once, when his vision had been clarified for the moment by the presentation of domestic needs resulting from a large line of bookshop purchases, he was compelled to fall back on a new and degrading line of argument, a refuge he would have scorned had he not been severely put to it.

"You know, Hannah, that while it may seem foolish at this moment to indulge in

such speculation, and while I may say with all sincerity that I have the utmost contempt for a book purchase from the money point of view, it is really a very profitable investment; for everybody must concede that I buy with judgment, and that I have not a book in my library on which I could not realize profits greatly in excess of the cost. In your inexperience, my dear, you are not to be blamed if these reflections do not immediately occur to you, but I am glad to be able to tell you, and it must be pleasant for you to know, that the book for which I pay one dollar to-day I may sell for two dollars to-morrow."

And Hannah, with a gentle little sigh of resignation, and with an exhaustive knowledge of the facts in the case, replied, "Yea, Thomas, I know, but thee never does sell, dear."

"There is something in that," said Thomas, with great candor, struck by the forcible suggestion that had heretofore escaped him; "but perhaps the reason is that to-morrow everything is all right.

Possibly you may complain, and with justice, that we have a poor supper to-night because I took advantage of a rare bargain which might not present itself again in a lifetime. Very likely the criticism is not without reason. But to-morrow our meals make up for the small privation of to-day and the need of selling is past. For while undoubtedly the percentage of profit is satisfactory in a pinch, the pinch having been removed, it would be a crime to dispose of a bargain needlessly at a small gain, when by waiting we could realize a greater. Surely you can understand that."

"I cannot say that I do, fully," answered Hannah, meekly; "but doubtless it is just as right that I do not understand. Thee is a wise man, Thomas, and we are getting along very well."

With all his wisdom and financial acumen to back him, Thomas's heart smote him after these conjugal controversies, and at times he even wondered if it might not be that he was mistaken in his logic. But as each temptation came it found him less

prepared to resist, and it is the happy lot of the bibliomaniac that the temptations and the lapses are so frequent that the time of remorse is necessarily and opportunely shortened. Thomas had worked steadily at his trade, and notwithstanding his besetting sin, no serious calamity seemed likely to befall the cottage or its inmates. Hannah had long learned to take life as it comes, at least resigned to if not ready for all emergencies, and her love for Thomas was so sincere, and her admiration so profound, that even his most glaring offenses against common prudence were turned into virtues by a kiss or an apology. Not so with Betty, the autocrat of the household, whose wrath rose at the sight of a book, and who was heard more than once to exclaim viciously that book-stores do more harm and are responsible for more unhappiness in this world than saloons. "Which," said Thomas, calmly, "merely goes to show the point of view when it comes to individual opinion."

The relations between Betty and

Thomas were, as Thomas himself confessed, somewhat equivocal. Ostensibly he had engaged her services for domestic employment at a stipulated sum for the week, but as payment was not infrequently deferred, she chose to take her interest in voluble expression, thereby demonstrating, as Thomas further explained, not merely the complexity of woman's nature, but the infinite variety of her talents. Whenever Thomas appeared at evening with a package under his arm, or a book protruding from his pocket—and such appearances were not so unusual as to excite gossip in the neighborhood—it was customary for Betty to give notice; and as such conditions were frequently arising, the notices came to amount to little more than a regular household incident. For Betty was as essential to Thomas and Hannah as was the care of this worthy and irresponsible couple to Betty herself, and any positive separation would have been considered by all parties concerned the final answer to all arguments for existence. But one night

Thomas came home very late, slightly out of humor, for he had missed a bargain of unusual splendor, and when Hannah forbore to reproach him, Betty assumed the offensive and announced the following Saturday as the time of her departure.

"No," said Thomas with firmness, "we'll have no unnecessary procrastination; you'll go to-morrow."

"And why will I go to-morrow?" demanded Betty, who was averse to any interference with her plans.

"I was just about to give the reason when you interrupted me. You're discharged."

"I'm what?" asked the astonished Betty.

"You're discharged. Didn't I make myself understood? Discharged."

"And who'll discharge me?"

"Well, just for the sake of argument, suppose I say I will."

"And who is running this house?" inquired Betty, rather impertinently, it is true, but she was under a tremendous strain.

"Up to the present time," replied Thomas, reflectively, "it would be a fair presumption that you have been running the house, but in the future, merely as a matter of principle and example of course, I think I shall try a hand at it."

Out of the room flounced Betty in great wrath, and a disquieting conviction assailed Thomas that he had gone too far. What if Betty should take him at his word? What if she should leave the house just at the time the house required her autocratic but faithful and kindly presence? Really the molehill had been unnecessarily magnified into a mountain. A man should be master of his household, and at the same time he should be willing to make allowances for the infirmities of temper of those who are debarred by the lack of education from the perfect exercise of self-control. After all, there was no servant like Betty. No one so well understood his appetite or so successfully withstood unpleasant and undesirable people who came about at inconvenient times on commercial business.

Even if she had been somewhat overbearing, were not her intentions the best and the fairest, and had she not always the interests of the family at heart? He must temporize. He must convey to Betty, without too great an infraction of his dignity, that perhaps, after suitable expression of contrition, he could be induced to overlook her transgression this time, and that his magnanimity might extend so far as to consent to give her another trial. In fact, if she proved inexorable and positively declined to listen to reason and accept his conciliatory offers, he must steal up to her room that night and lock her securely in until she could be brought to an appreciation of the absurdity of her conduct.

While he was thus conjecturing a way out of the difficulty Betty herself appeared on the scene. A high determination was written on her countenance, and Thomas braced himself for the worst.

"Mr. Ballinger," she said, very stiffly, "you owe me some wages, I believe."

"Yes, Betty," replied Thomas, grasping

eagerly at the straw, and with a propitiatory smile, "I think I am in arrears to you for about four months' service. It may be five or six; I don't recall the exact period."

"And you 're ready to pay me?"

"Really, Betty," said Thomas, thoughtfully, "I don't believe I happen to have so much money about me at this time."

"Then if you're not ready to pay me, how can you discharge me?"

"That is just what I have been thinking, and it is strange how I overlooked it in our little argument. The fact is, Betty," he added, coaxingly, "I have been debating that proposition in my own mind, and I have just about come to the conclusion that if you'll wait—"

"Mr. Ballinger," interrupted Betty, with impressive dignity, "if you're not ready to pay me, and if you haven't the money, there's only one thing for me in duty to do. I'll stay and work it out."

If Thomas Ballinger had not possessed complete mastery of his emotion he would

have fallen on that good creature's neck and wept tears of joy. As it was, he thanked her very tremulously and asked her to try to forget his hasty and inconsiderate words. More than this he begged her to accept as a peace-offering a little book he had procured that day, an ancient volume treating at some length of certain saints connected with the form of religion with which Betty personally associated every Sunday morning at a preposterously early hour. At any other time it is probable that Betty, notwithstanding the compliment to her religious proclivities, would have spurned the gift, for to her a book was not only a book, but a miserable device of the Evil One, and stood for everything that is destructive of domestic discipline and household economy. However, she accepted it in the grateful spirit in which it was proffered, and was heard to say afterward that she derived much spiritual refreshment from the perusal of its admirable example and teachings. Thus peace was restored to the house of Ballinger, and

thus the occupants prepared themselves for further trouble.

These were in the days when, as Thomas put it, he was a sprightly young fellow of fifty, with as quick an eye and as keen a scent as ever detected a first edition or pointed the way to hidden literary treasure. It was therefore the most natural thing in the world that he should chafe under an employment, lucrative enough after a fashion, but monotonous and uncongenial to a man of wholly bookish predilections. Thomas thought it all out in an evening—he was of quick and decisive action where his preferences were concerned—and he made the announcement conclusively and with the most evident sincerity.

"If I am ever going to accomplish anything in life, Hannah, I must begin now. I am convinced, after nearly thirty years of plodding with the types, that, beyond gaining a bare living, I have wasted my time and talents. I am now, as New Englanders and persons of New England descent go, just in the prime of manhood, equipped

to try any experiment, and sure to succeed in anything that has the slightest promise of success. It has been evident to me, and to everybody who has thought over the subject, and who is competent to express an intelligent opinion, that what this city needs is a first-class old bookshop, conducted by a man who knows the business and runs it on legitimate business principles, a man strictly honest, altogether reliable, and content to make a fair profit on his investments. I believe I may say without fear of boasting that I am that man. At least, I am firmly persuaded in my own mind that I fill the bill, and if at any time I find I am mistaken—which I regard impossible—I can easily go back to my trade and be sure of a living."

Great was the family consternation at this thunderbolt. Betty gave notice as usual, the only thing she could consistently do in the premises, and communicated the story to the maid next door that "Mr. Thomas has it worse than ever." "It," was the general way in the neighborhood

of referring to Thomas's malady, and the announcement caused universal grief and many expressions of sympathy for poor Mrs. Ballinger. Hannah rewarded the information with a sigh so much deeper and more heartfelt than her accustomed sighs that Thomas, almost relenting, felt bound to reassure her. And when Thomas put his arm around her and spoke in that caressing tone, so full of confidence and joyousness, what could simple little Hannah see in life save happiness and fortune?

"It is so easy, dear. Can you not see that all I have to do is to buy a book in another part of the country, bring it here, and sell it for three and often four and five times as much as I paid for it? The average book-buyer loses all fear of price when you have the book he is seeking—"

"Yea, Thomas," interrupted Hannah, very feelingly, "we know that very well, dear."

"While I intend," said Thomas, unheedful of the interruption, "to be honorable and straightforward, always giving value

received, so far as the buyer is concerned, I shall not fail to make immediate and large profits on my investments. We shall prosper at once. We shall soon reap the benefit of my experience and study. Little luxuries you have been compelled to deny yourself on account of the smallness of my earnings will now be yours, and we may be able to keep our carriage—who knows? Quaritch did."

Hannah's lip trembled. In that beautiful, kindly soul, accustomed to the joys of expectation and the swiftly following pangs of disappointment, there may have been doubts based on the phantoms of the past, but no word came to reproach the dreamer or repress his fancies. Very gently she took his face between her hands and kissed it, and said:

"Thee knows what is best for us, Thomas. It is not for me to question thy wisdom or dispute thy reasoning."

In spite of Thomas's large hopes and glittering expectations it soon became evident that while he had not miscalculated

the general desire and eagerness of the public, he had failed to take into account his own amiable but disastrous weakness. It was one thing for a man of his book-loving propensities to buy a volume; it was quite another thing to sell it, whatever the public demand. So it came about that whenever he procured a book for which a customer was willing to pay a considerable price, and which excited the desire of acquisition in the bookish circles, Thomas would retire to a secluded corner in the rear of his shop and commune thus anxiously with his soul:

"Is this man sincerely and earnestly a lover of books? While he may have money enough to indulge a passing fancy, and while he may be eager to complete a set or to exult over a collector less fortunate, am I justified in permitting such a treasure to go from my hands on a purely sordid basis? Should I be acting with proper respect to the memory of the author whose heart was in his work, and who wrote purely for book-lovers? Would my

conscience justify me in a transaction so unmistakably mercenary? In short, would not that book give me far more happiness than it could possibly give to him, and should I not, by all the sacred traditions of bibliophiles, transfer it to my own library?''

Thereupon he would return to the baffled and astonished customer, apologize for the misunderstanding, and gravely regret that he had promised the book to another. And in the darkness of night he would spirit it to his home, and sit up with it in the security of his den, patting it fondly and glorying in its never-diminishing delights.

With such constantly recurring experiences it was not strange that the large profits so boastfully predicted failed to flow into the family coffers. Customers marveled that while they were unable to buy for themselves the books exhibited on the shelves, and which subsequently disappeared, they could never trace them to the houses of the book-seeking fraternity—for Thomas kept a hard and fast rule that

no bibliophile should be permitted to enter his den. "All men are not so honest as I," he said, significantly, "and kleptomania is too often associated with bibliomania. I do not mean to intimate," he added, "that my friends are not to be trusted; I merely wish to keep from putting them in the way of temptation."

Thus the days ran on, and the golden age of prosperity seemed more distant than ever. Household bills became more pressing, and Betty admitted that she was at the end of her eloquence and resources to defer the day of judgment. Hannah, with her hair a little whiter and her face a little paler, bore her lot uncomplainingly, unshaken in her faith in the man she loved, and believing against all rational belief that time would justify his hopes and promises.

In his candid moments Thomas would confess with the most engaging simplicity that his judgment was all right, though his impulses might be all wrong. "Unfortunately," he would add, "my impulses always take the precedence of my judg-

ment. Now, if we could so reconstruct our natures that we have no impulses whatever, how much more harmoniously this world would be conducted. Questions would then immediately resolve themselves into a matter of judgment, and persons so well equipped in that direction as myself would have not the slightest difficulty in perpetually doing the right thing. But what can be expected when this thing we call judgment comes along after the impulse has disposed of the point at issue?" And the grief with which Thomas presented this interrogatory always obtained sympathy if it did not carry conviction.

Mr. Diggs, to whom this metaphysical problem was offered, could find nothing to say in contradiction, but one evening a fair illustration of the difficulty was introduced, when Thomas came home with a treasure not exchangeable either at the grocery or the butcher's shop.

"It's a little thing I picked up to-day at a private sale," he said, with a sort of forced gayety to Hannah, who met him at

the door, holding several ominous papers in her hand, "the greatest find I have had in a month. When I tell you that it is a contemporaneous account of the Gordon No Popery riots, and that there are only three known copies in existence, you will understand its value and congratulate me on the purchase, which I must say was surprisingly cheap."

"The No Popery riots?" echoed Hannah. "I do not know what they are, Thomas. I have never heard of them."

"Exactly; that is what I thought," replied Thomas, briskly, and that is one of the reasons I bought the book. We shall read it together, dear, and you will find it one of the most entertaining and instructive of eighteenth-century records."

"And what will thee do with it then, Thomas?" inquired the afflicted Hannah.

"Well, I have not quite decided. I thought I would put it away in the bookcase for a few days in order that I may consult it from time to time. And then I can dispose of it as opportunity arises."

"Ah, Thomas," sighed Hannah, "has thee not yet learned that whatever goes into that bookcase never comes out? I must be a poor wife who always interferes with her husband's pleasures and deprives him of his best comforts, but trouble has come. This paper tells me that thy taxes are due and wholly unpaid, and the insurance man has written that thee has neglected thy last premium. Betty spoke to me to-day of money which I could not give her, and the grocer's boy has called twice. What, then, will it profit us that we may read of the No Popery riots or rejoice in the scarcity of copies?"

The cloud gathered on Thomas's face, for he recognized the force of the argument. They went into the house and Thomas sat down and gave himself over to reflection. Then he said, repentantly:

"You are right, as you are always right. My judgment tells me now that my impulses failed me when I did not accept an advance of ten dollars on the original price, offered immediately after I bought the

book. But I see my mistake and I shall atone for it. Here I begin a new leaf, and I shall prove to you that I know how to take advantage of things to our profit. To-morrow I shall take the book back—yes, that is the thing to do—and dispose of it as I can, even if I am obliged to sell it at the purchase price. I feel much stronger, now that I have made up my mind to do the right thing. As for these trifles you speak of, dear, these little matters of mere business detail, don't let them worry you. I shall easily find a way to provide for them, and that shall be my first duty after I have disencumbered myself of this wretched book."

With this Thomas looked longingly and dejectedly at the offending volume, a glance that was not lost on the anxious wife.

"Perhaps there may be another way out of our difficulty," she said, gently, "for it seems cruel to deprive thee of what thee has set thy heart on so strongly. And I feel so helpless, dear, when I think how much a cleverer woman might do to per-

mit her husband to gratify his great tastes. If I only had some jewelry I could sell, or if I could earn money in some way, the book might still be thine."

Even a less impulsive man than Thomas might have been moved by this show of wifely devotion, for it was all so simple and so genuine that it struck the heart with double force. He replied with feeling:

"No, Hannah, there is no sacrifice of which thee is not capable, and there is nothing of generosity or help which thee has ever withheld. It is through thy goodness that thee will see that I am stronger than even I believed, and that I can carry out the good determination I have formed. What should I be without thy gentleness and affection, dear? How impatiently I am waiting to show thee what new desires thee has kindled for my better life, and how I long to prove to thee the firmness of my will."

In the morning he exhibited the book, carefully wrapped up in many thicknesses of paper, in order, as he jokingly explained,

that the temptation might be as far removed as possible. "You see, Hannah," he cried, exultingly, "the victory is already won. Not once last evening did I permit myself to look at this abominable thing, and I am carrying it back as cheerfully and contentedly as if there were a copy in every library in the land."

So Hannah, with her eyes a little moist, kissed him affectionately and he started for the city with resolution firmly written on his face. And he paused at the corner to wave a last farewell, and to point with marked significance to the package, which he brandished with a gesture of contempt. But in the evening when he returned, Hannah noted with much dejection that he still carried in his hand the mysterious parcel with the heavy wrapping, and her heart sank. She would say nothing, this paragon of love and gentleness, to reproach him, but he caught the sad look on her face, and while blushing guiltily, vainly endeavored to repress the note of triumph in his voice as he said:

"You think I have failed, Hannah, and that I am weaker than my boasting. I do not blame you for your suspicions, for I own that much that I have done warrants any doubt of my ability to carry out so large a promise. But this time you are mistaken, and I have triumphed. I carried back the book as I intended, and I have disposed of it in a manner that will give you as much pleasure as it has given me."

"And this?" asked Hannah, pointing to the package.

"Ah, this is a master stroke. This is one of the accomplishments of business ingenuity we read about in fiction. This is positively a feat of genius. As I said, I carried back the book, strong in the resolution I made last evening, and was just on the point of selling it to the man who was my rival in the bidding when fortune intervened and sent one of my best customers to the shop. No sooner had he clapped his eyes on the book than I saw by the unmistakable gleam of mania that he was

doomed. He took me aside and declared that, whatever I might have promised, the book must be his. So we dickered and bargained until I brought him to my terms."

"Still I do not understand," said Hannah.

"Of course not, replied Thomas, "for we have not yet come to the conclusion. This customer of mine has long had an Essays of Elia—first series, Hannah—on which I have set my heart. I have cajoled and flattered, set traps and made offers, but he is such a stubborn fellow, and so unreasonable, that I could not coax it from him. Nothing short of the monumental patience of Job restrained me from giving up the fight long ago. But I hung on persistently and bided my time, and to-day the Lord rewarded me and delivered him into my hand. Now do you see?"

"Do I see," said Hannah, "that thee has exchanged one book for another? Is it an exchange?"

"Exactly—that is, almost exactly. Of

course I could not expect that he would consent to an even exchange. I cannot rob a man even while I best him, but when I recall that I made the exchange with merely the extra consideration of a paltry five-dollar bill, I could hug myself for joy."

"Yet, Thomas," interposed Hannah, very faintly, "how will the substitution of one book for another help us in our present emergencies? What advantage can we draw from these essays, which thee has, over those which might have come from the riots? Of course thee is right, dear, for thee is always right, but still I cannot understand, and the grocer's boy has been here again."

"The point is," explained Thomas, with a reassuring smile, "that this book is really worth much more than the other. Even to-day, did any real trouble confront us, I could dispose of it for a sum that would pay these trifling bills which are so annoying to you. But by putting it carefully away, and waiting until I can find the man who is really anxious to possess it, I dare

not attempt to say what it will bring. There is where the science of book collecting, from a mercenary point of view, is displayed. So you see that I have made a bargain after all, and you will acknowledge that you share my joy and that we are very fortunate."

And Hannah, loyal, faithful Hannah, who knew what it was to experience much more fear and anxiety than joy, smiled bravely and went up to Thomas and kissed him and dissembled with all that adorable guile of which woman is capable, while she said:

"Thy joy is always my happiness, dear, and I know it will all come out right in good time. And though our way may seem a little dark and uncertain, and we are wandering in a maze of difficulties, thy good judgment and hopefulness are sure to bring us through if I am but patient and strong-hearted, as I shall try to be. We shall triumph over all our little troubles in the future, Thomas, as we have triumphed in the past. Thee shall teach me to be as

cheery and sanguine as thyself, and I will try to be as brave as I am happy."

Whereupon these two children embraced with fervor, and Thomas went off to his den to gloat over his new treasure and see that it was properly catalogued and bestowed away. But if, as the night wore on, he could have stood invisible in Hannah's chamber, and read her thoughts as she put up her petition in humbleness of spirit, he might have been stirred in his love for a greater treasure. For in the privacy of her soul-communion this gentle creature prayed:

"And Thou wilt bless him who is so dear to me, and prolong his days that I may the longer be with him and love him. And Thou wilt, in Thy great mercy and wisdom, so direct and guide him that he may be weaned from his infatuation and taught to walk discreetly in the paths of safety. Help us, dear Lord, for our ways are sorely troubled!"

ALL the children on the street and in the neighborhood knew Thomas. The little girls smiled on him and the little boys pelted him with snowballs or early vegetables or small and unripe fruits, as the season of the year afforded weapons. These attentions were measurably lost on Thomas for the sufficiently conclusive reason that he was near-sighted and the boys were bad marksmen. It does not follow through reason of the recital of these hostile demonstrations that Thomas was not fond of the little folk; he who loves books usually loves children, though sometimes in the abstract and for purposes of illustration, as was the case with Thomas. And down in their mischievous little hearts the boys liked Thomas, whom they dubbed "Old Books" in recognition of his profession and the general nature of his parcels, and whom they pelted merely because it is the formula of a boy's life that whenever

you see anything to hit you must hit it. The little girls liked Thomas because on a memorable occasion he had stopped to rescue a kitten from the fangs of a dog about the size of a cocoanut, for it is born in little girls to be tender-hearted and appreciative of the nicer amenities of life. But whether the children liked him or he liked them was a question which had never offered itself to Thomas's attention in the press of other and seemingly more important matters.

It was the caprice of fate that one afternoon, as he was returning from the shop, Thomas approached the corner of the street leading to his house just as a very small young woman on roller skates, with a set expression around the mouth, came tearing down the sidewalk to the natural point of intersection. Just why this young lady persisted in turning to the left when the necessities of residence compelled Thomas to turn to the right, and without audible warning or even telepathic communication, is a problem that may be left

to the psychologists, but the two turns were accomplished simultaneously and the inevitable happened. Thomas carried under his arm the usual number of books demanded by long precedent, and was otherwise provided with parcels of a domestic nature. Consequently when the small young woman precipitated herself full upon his stomach the books and parcels flew in all directions, and as Thomas recoiled from the shock he became conscious of a pair of plump little legs raising themselves in the air from a tangled mass of varied and variegated clothing.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Thomas, when it became apparent that the cyclone had passed, "what has happened, and what have we here?"

The little legs wriggled back to earth, the clothing fell around them, and very slowly the head and shoulders of a surprised and offended little girl came into view. She was a pretty little girl, with dark hair that tumbled all over her head and face, with snappy black eyes, a pleas-

ant little nose, and the kind of mouth that promised attractions of an unusual nature at a later period. A woman would have noticed at once that her clothing put her above the level of the ordinary children of the neighborhood, but all such signs of opulence and distinction were lost on Thomas, who continued to regard the cause of his disaster with amused interest. The little girl was the first to speak. "Was it you?" she said.

"Partly," replied Thomas, with a smile, "and partly you. I think we may both claim the honor."

The child smoothed down her little skirts and felt solicitously of her knees. "I am very sorry."

"Which shows that you are an extremely polite little girl," Thomas answered, kindly, "and I am going to ask your name."

"My name is Helen Bascom, but folks I don't like call me Nellie."

"That is strange. My name is Thomas Ballinger, and folks I do like very much call me Tommy."

The little girl looked interested. "I know you," she said; "you live down in the cottage with Aunt Thou."

This characterization of the good Hannah appealed to Thomas's sense of humor, and he laughed uproariously. "So you know Aunt Thou, do you? Well we shall get on famously. How do you like her, now that you know her, and how does it happen that you became acquainted?"

"We all know Aunt Thou," continued the child, with no abatement of her gravity. "She makes good cakes."

"Yes," said Thomas, "making cakes is one of her prime qualifications. I think that was the way she first attracted my serious attention."

Thomas had not improved his opportunities to talk to children and did not choose his words with any reference to juvenile comprehension. The little girl stared at him curiously.

"Meanwhile," he went on, good-naturedly, "you have knocked off my spectacles, and I appear to be out three

books and two paper parcels. How would you like to help me look for them? Ah, here are the spectacles; thank you very much. One, two, yes, these are the parcels. And the books. William Penn's Reflections on the Conduct of Human Life, yes; and Ricketts's Defence of the Revival of Printing—that makes two; and Caxton's Sayings of the Philosophers —now we have them all, and you are a very smart little girl."

"I'll carry them for you, if you like," said the child.

"Will you, my dear? Now, that is most opportune. I was just wondering what your Aunt Thou would say when she saw me coming down the street with all this literature; for, just between you and me, Helen, I don't believe this sort of reading is much in her line. But I forgot to ask you if you were hurt. You are not? I'm glad of that. Of course you have no way of knowing it, but I am very fond of children. I was a school-teacher once."

Helen looked as if that announcement

did not carry with it any reason for special gratification, but as she was a well-trained little girl she said nothing in disparagement of the calling, and by this time they had reached the door of the cottage.

"I don't think I'll go in to-day," Helen remarked, with the most gracious condescension, as she surrendered the books.

"That is certainly an unexpected blow," replied Thomas, delighted with the ingenuousness of the child. "But possibly you will favor us some other time. You shall come and I will show you my books."

"Are they like these?" asked the child, doubtfully.

"Not all of them. I dare say we shall find a few that would be interesting to you. So you must come, for I like you very much."

"I'll come," said the child, with a solemnity that seemed to indicate more a call of duty than a visit of pleasure, and she departed with great dignity, carrying her skates in her hand.

Much diverted by his experience Thomas related the particulars to Hannah, who

immediately recognized by the description and the name the daughter of the most magnificent householder along the shore. "Thee has treated the little lady with scant courtesy, I fear, Thomas," she said, chidingly.

"By no means," replied Thomas. "I have invited her to call and she has accepted with pleasure. Nothing could have been more ceremonious or courteous."

"The child of Stephen Bascom will find little to interest her in our cottage, Thomas."

"Well, I am not so sure of that. The child of Stephen Bascom, so far as I can see, is much like any other child. She has already found enough in your cakes to interest her, so if all other devices fail we can fall back on the kitchen and the pantry. If I cannot appeal to her intellectual side we may win through the stomach."

"I sometimes wish God had sent us a little child like that, Thomas," said Hannah, looking wistfully at the children playing in the street.

"And so do I, if she could be like you, dear," answered the lover, stooping to kiss the old wife; "but," he went on, gayly, "what would Betty do with another child in the house? She complains now that she has too many children to look after."

The next morning the little girl with the tangled hair and the roller skates was a far-off memory, and as one day quickly followed another Thomas completely forgot his offer of hospitality and his promised guest. But toward the end of the week, as he came up the steps, and started to unlock the door, he heard a child's voice come out from the vines around the porch:

"How do you do, Tommy?"

Startled by such unexpected familiarity, Thomas turned quickly and saw coming toward him his little friend of the adventure, rather elaborately dressed, considering her age and size, but perfectly composed and unconscious of anything unusual in her appearance or salutation. "I have come to call," she said.

"Why, it's little Helen!" exclaimed

Thomas. "Now this is a treat. But tell me," he added, with a twinkle, "how did you happen to remember my name so perfectly?"

"Oh," answered the child, gravely, "you know that you said that people you like very much call you Tommy. And you said you liked me very much, so I must call you Tommy."

"And so I did, and so you must," said Thomas, overcome by such a logical conclusion, "but ladies who call me Tommy always kiss me, and I cannot let you off."

As Helen showed no disposition to escape the responsibility, and as she accepted the situation in the most matter-of-fact way, the ceremony was performed without unnecessary delay. "Now," said Thomas, "since you have been appropriately received at the portals, let us go in and look at the splendors of this mansion."

The thought that he was entertaining the daughter of a millionaire appealed more to the humorous sense of Thomas than of

Hannah, for that good woman, while recognizing the youth of the visitor, and while drawn to her by every motherly instinct, could not repress a shuddering dread that the child was making mental note of the shabbiness of the surroundings and contrasting the narrowness and plainness of the cottage with the luxury of her own home. With all her admirable virtues Hannah was still a woman. This uneasiness was not lost on Thomas, who continued to load the little girl with mock attentions.

"You will note, Helen, I hope, that we are occupying this house only temporarily, or until we move into our new palace. This is the parlor—somewhat small, even for our purposes, but the furnishings are of the most antique, not to say antiquated, pattern. Here is the dining-room, commanding a fine and unobstructed view of the lake. Just beyond is the closet where Aunt Thou secretes her Napoleon plates and her Louis XVI. cups and saucers. And at the left there, you will see the

pantry, sacred to those cakes which put us on a common footing.''

But all this raillery was lost on the little girl, who hardly looked around, and who said, very simply, ''I should like to see the books.''

Now, if the good angel who is supposed to stand invisible at the side of every child, and provide against all possible mishaps and peradventure, had whispered in Helen's ear, he could not have instructed her to say anything more pleasing to Thomas or more fortunate for herself. The effect was instantaneous, and the old bookman reproached himself for his banter. ''Surely,'' he thought, ''a child who wishes to look at books is no ordinary creature whose time may be wasted exploring pantries and looking at dilapidated dining-room chairs. I see now that I have been entirely mistaken in this little girl, who is certainly not only intelligent, but uncommonly pretty, and I have no doubt that she has a fine mind which can be directed to a high degree of intellectuality notwithstand-

ing the presumable poverty of her home surroundings. This error of mine illustrates how carelessly we may misjudge those who are appreciative of good things and capable of the better thought." And then, in a gentle and kindly tone, he said:

"So you shall, my dear. I had quite forgotten that we had come to see a different kind of antiques. You shall see the books, and I will tell you all about them, and one of these days, when you are older and able to read them for yourself, we'll have famous times together—just you and I, Helen, reading and talking and explaining, and incidentally, collecting."

So up the stairs they climbed and came to the den, which was found in as admirable disorder as ever charmed the fancy of the most normal and healthy child. The books were piled indiscriminately on the table and ran over the shelves. The pictures hung on the walls at all sorts of angles, and letters and manuscript and autographed poems were framed or half framed or pinned rather recklessly on the

doors and along the window-sashes. "Ho," cried the little girl, and her eyes danced as she took in the bewilderment of objects, and she clapped her hands, "this is lovely!"

While Thomas stood in silent enjoyment of the child's ecstasy, she turned to him suddenly and asked:

"Are you in the grocery business, Tommy?"

"Why, no, dear," replied Thomas, a little staggered by the abruptness of the unexpected question; "to be honest with you, I am not in the grocery business. Why do you ask? Do you see anything here that suggests a grocery store?"

"No, but you have such lots of beautiful things in this room, and whenever we get anything new that we like at our house, father always says, 'Well, we must thank the grocery business for this.' "

"That's the right way to look at it," answered Thomas, with emphasis. "Always be grateful to the grocery business if it supplies you with the luxuries you

like. Never be above the honorable means that keep you in what you want. Now, in my case, it is the bookshop business which affords me all these pleasures. How many times have I tried to impress this on your Aunt Thou, who is usually a woman of such quick perceptions, but she cannot seem to understand it." And Thomas spoke with much feeling.

"I suppose," said Helen, with dejection, "that the reason we don't have a nice room full of things like these is because we are in the grocery business."

"Yes," replied Thomas, pityingly, "I am afraid that is true. Of course your father has plenty of money and can buy all the books you need. That is not the reason. But I dare say that when a man comes home at night with his head full of the price of coffee and sugar and codfish and cocoanuts, he has no time to think of books. I cannot blame him," he added, magnanimously, "but I will admit that I am sorry for him."

The child shook her head mournfully as

she walked from one object to another. "It's too bad we are not in the bookshop business."

"O, as to that," said Thomas, soothingly, "the grocery business is not so bad, and I presume there are some things about it which make it really desirable. I have often thought myself, at the end of the month, that it would be quite worth while to be connected with a grocery, though at other times I do not give it much thought."

"If you want to go into the grocery business," spoke up the child quickly, "I can fix that."

"You can fix that, and how?"

"I'll tell my father to take you in with us."

"Really, that is most kind," chuckled Thomas, "but it may be that your father will not care to have me for a partner."

"My father does everything I say," replied the child, imperiously, and with the air of one who considered the matter already settled.

"What a little autocrat we have here, to

be sure," said Thomas. "Let me tell you what I'll do, Helen. Suppose you let me peg away at the bookshop business a while longer, and then if I do not make a success of it, you can take me into the grocery business. Perhaps it would be just as well not to say anything to your father about it at present, for he might be terribly disappointed to think what he has lost, and when we may, we should always try to keep unpleasant things from our friends."

Then Thomas took the little girl around the room and showed her all his treasures, and told her of the pictures and the great men they represented. And he allowed her to handle the precious manuscript—letters that would have brought fabulous prices at public sale—and explained to her the conditions under which they were written—how, when he was a little boy, scarcely larger than herself, these famous men, long dead, had written to him, and how he had walked and talked with them in the long ago. But most of all the child wondered at the old bookcase, and toyed with the big

padlock, and peered curiously and longingly through the glass doors at the little brown and faded books so carefully locked away. This Thomas pretended not to see, but afterward he confessed to Hannah that it had excited his amazement.

"I cannot hide from myself the fact," said he, "that my meeting with this little girl was providential interposition. There is more in her than her parents and our good but somewhat dull neighbors see, and it is perfectly clear that heaven has decreed that I am to be the humble instrument to raise her from her depressing environment. How fortunate it is that I turned the corner that day just as she came down the street under a full head of steam. Wonderful are the workings of Providence."

Perhaps it occurred to Hannah, as it might have occurred to any one of her sex, that the environment of a small young woman who was the petted and only child of a many times millionaire was not altogether so depressing and deplorable as

Thomas feared. But she was too loyal a wife to dispute his conclusions, so she merely replied: "Thee is a wise instructor for any child, Thomas, and the good Lord does everything for the best."

It was certainly creditable to the innate piety of this worthy couple that whenever things went satisfactorily the Lord always received full praise and acknowledgment, though neither Thomas nor Hannah was conspicuous in church circles or public meetings of the elect. And if, on the other hand, matters turned out disastrously, there was no grumbling at the higher power, or disposition to shirk the responsibilities of mortal weakness and error. As Christians go in this advanced generation, the old bookman and his Quaker wife were well up in the procession of unostentatious believers.

"I have been giving this matter considerable thought," said Thomas, rather solemnly, "and I have come to the conclusion that the peculiar attitude of Helen Bascom toward books is clearly the influence of unexplained heredity."

"Will she never get over it?" anxiously asked Hannah. The thought of the poor child growing up and inviting domestic suffering by a slavish partiality for books was too much for this excellent soul's maternal feelings.

"I trust not," answered Thomas, glancing over his spectacles with a look of mild reproach. "Such a holy passion should be encouraged. It means a great deal, Hannah."

"Yes, Thomas"—this very meekly—"it means a great deal."

"I was going on to say," he resumed, "when you broke in irrelevantly, that the child has all the natural instincts of a book lover and collector. Something in her, which may have skipped, and probably did skip, three or four generations, draws her as irresistibly to books as other children are attracted to ordinary juvenile pleasures. Else why did she single out that old bookcase for her special admiration?"

"Perhaps it was the glass doors?" ventured Hannah.

"Nonsense. Is it not likely that she sees plenty of glass doors at home?"

"Then it may have been the padlock. That is truly a very large and striking padlock."

"Not at all. You are making the mistake of supposing that this is an ordinary child and one attracted by ordinary objects. It was the books—the peculiar kind of books that always excites the slumbering collecting instinct. This is a psychological phenomenon which she is too young to understand, much less to explain, but I understand it perfectly, for one true book-lover is always in sympathetic touch with another, and I remember that I had this same bewildering experience when I was her age. It is plainly my duty to develop that instinct, and I expect to prove to you that my theory is correct, and that the child knows instinctively not only an old book from a modern one, but a rare book from the drug in the market."

"But, Thomas, does thee think that her parents will be pleased to have thee

superintend her education? Perhaps they may have other plans for the little lady, that will fit her for the part she must play in the great world, and will be averse to thy teaching."

"In the ordinary significance of the word I do not expect to be her teacher," answered Thomas, somewhat severely, "for I shall merely guide her along certain lines, as I was so fortunately conducted when I was a child. It means a great deal in the book world to be started right."

Whatever Hannah's opinions as to this may have been, as formed from a somewhat rigorous experience, she did not choose to express them, and Thomas went on:

"Our atmosphere here, I think I may say, is fairly bookish, and our home influence is decidedly beneficial to any child who really wishes to lead a studious life. Should this little girl desire to partake of this atmosphere and influence from time to time, we should not deprive her of the

opportunity. In fact, her eagerness may stimulate us to renewed appreciation of the blessings of books."

Hannah smiled. "God help us!" groaned Betty in the kitchen.

IT is not in the least degree improbable that had not Thomas Ballinger felt compelled to prove his theory in order to preserve his home reputation the experience in the den would have been merely a passing incident. In no small measure his enthusiasm was kept alive by the little girl herself, who had conceived a violent attachment for her new friend, and who waylaid him with such frankness and unconscious persistence that he succumbed as quickly to her attentions as he had previously surrendered to his curiosity. Miss Helen was nothing if not arbitrary, but she made her exactions so politely and winningly that a much more crafty man than Thomas might have easily capitulated. "There is a time to skate and a time to study," he would exclaim, gayly, when he came home in the afternoon and found her waiting for him at the corner or on the porch. And then they would go together up into the den and

discuss such topics as an old book-gatherer and his young disciple would naturally affect.

Notwithstanding Thomas's brief and somewhat inglorious career as a pedagogue, he soon showed that with an apt and interested pupil he was abundantly qualified to take the chair of English literature. And he found that he must begin at the beginning, a condition that pleased him greatly, for it further bore out his theory of an inherited literary impulse. The little girl for a long time experienced the difficulty which the student of philosophy encounters when first he confronts the masters; much that Thomas said went over her head, for he had not yet learned the art of talking to children, and addressed her with as much formality and with as stately words as if he were delivering an address in a post-graduate course. Hannah ventured to suggest that he might simplify his speech occasionally for the child's benefit, but he replied, loftily, "What does it matter how I speak to her? The girl has the instinct, and gets

the meaning intuitively." Thomas was true to his theory.

And perhaps he was right. For the little girl listened to him with rapt attention as he went over the story of his boyhood days, and told her how he had talked with Mr. Longfellow just as sociably and frankly as he was now talking with her. Indeed, it surprised him not a little to find that she did not appear to recall Mr. Longfellow, as it would have been entirely in harmony with his expanding theory to learn that she had known him well in a previous incarnation. There were some discrepancies in this personal ignorance which Thomas could not reconcile, and with which he was constantly at war. Then he would go to the old bookcase and take out one of the faded books and read to her the human poems of the human singer, and they would stand together at the window and look out over the great lake and give full play to their romantic fancies. It pleased them to think of the water-crib, two miles distant, as the Gurnet which the May Flower rounded,

"Leaving far to the southward
Island and cape of sand, and the Field of the First
Encounter."

The lighter ripples of the sand that showed the bar near the shore they would call the reef of Norman's Woe, and the little yachts that danced and bobbed down the lake in threatening proximity were always associated in Helen's mind with the ill-fated Hesperus. When she learned the poem and would recite it at Thomas's bidding, taking her station at the window where she could see the bar—and she now firmly believed it was the poet's reef—the tears would come to her eyes at the tragical conclusion, while Thomas rubbed his spectacles and cleared his throat before he ventured to say, "Very well, little Helen, very well!"

For days in a musty shop and evenings in an atmosphere of books had not driven all the sentiment from the old man's nature, and this child, with her strange enthusiasm for the things he loved, eagerly listening to his stories of books and bookmen, and

reciting one after another the poems of his fancy, stirred up the happy memories, and often he would weep when something in the child's voice touched him a little too deeply, and he would cry out at the close: "This is finer than the grocery business, eh, Helen?"

"Much finer, Tommy," the child would gravely answer.

Since the day she had startled him by her familiar address Thomas had insisted that she should never call him anything more formal than Tommy, and without the faintest idea of any impropriety Helen had obeyed. The comradeship that existed from the beginning between the old man and the little girl grew stronger as the months went by, and whenever he was at home Thomas was restless and uneasy until he saw his little bookworm, as he called her. A less gentle spirit than Hannah's might have rebelled at this partiality, but the child with no less sureness had found her way as well into that motherly heart, and the joyousness of her

young life and the eagerness of her hope and purpose had carried Hannah back over the waste of forty years to the days when everything had been bright and beautiful to her before—before—ah, what tragedies lie hidden in that little word—before!

On Saturday afternoon, or at the beginning of a long holiday, when the child came to the cottage, Thomas would call out to her, "Come, little Helen, let's go off to Walden pond!" And down to one of the city parks they would trudge, and Thomas would hire a boat that they might row out on the artificial lake while he told her again of his boyhood and of the time when he and Mr. Thoreau were boon companions in adventures by land and water. Indeed, it is to be feared that the old man's descriptions were rather too glowing for the imagination of the child, for Helen's youthful ideas of the poet-naturalist pictured a giant several feet higher than the average man, with arms like tree-trunks and with the strength of a Titan. Thomas himself declared that never had he seen a boat

rowed with such skill and swiftness as Thoreau employed, although, if pressed, he would reluctantly admit that he had witnessed little or no oarsmanship since that hazy and remarkable period.

"It is truly astonishing," said Thomas, in one of his philosophic musings, "how material things dwarf with age. I remember distinctly that when I was a boy, there was a walnut-tree back of the old parsonage down in Massachusetts that stood at least three hundred and fifty feet high. There can be no doubt of it; I recall it perfectly. Yet my neighbor, Colver, who spent a summer in that neighborhood a year or two ago, told me that it had fallen away fully eighty per cent of that measurement. It seems incredible that such shrinkage could have been accomplished in a few years, and I was almost tempted to write on and secure the exact dimensions, but Colver is a truthful man, one whose word is to be accepted for any ordinary narration, and I did not like to pain him by implying any doubt." And Thomas in

his heart would silently give thanks that Thoreau had passed away in comparative youth, before the ravages of time could shrivel that imposing figure.

The Bascoms were mildly amused by the interest their daughter took in "the Professor," as Bascom was accustomed to designate Thomas. Although Bascom knew that Thomas was the proprietor of an old bookshop, and although Mrs. Bascom, with proper maternal solicitude, had secured assurances that the Ballingers were respectable and worthy folk, they had not allowed their own sympathy to go to greater lengths. The fact that Thomas was in any way connected with books conveyed to Bascom's mind the wholly inconsequent notion that he must be a professor, in title if not in actual occupation, for Bascom was too fully taken up with multitudinous commercial interests to give much thought to the minor distinctions of the intellectual life. As for Mrs. Bascom, to whom her husband admiringly referred as "the Major," in consequence of a commanding air in the juris-

diction of the home, she had her doubts as to the worldly advantages arising from too close intercourse with a library, but she was a woman of affairs too engrossing to be diverted by the whim of a child.

With the passing of the months the girl began to give evidences of beneficial results from intercourse with the bookman, and to talk familiarly of bookish subjects which were little more than the memory of a name to her father. Bascom's curiosity was stimulated, and when he learned that she could recite whole pages of poetry from the old man's library, he was so pleased that he declared that the very next day he would lay in a supply of books that would be a credit to the British Museum. To this Helen demurred, and pointed out to her astonished father that such a proceeding would be wholly incompatible with their position as the head of a large grocery business. For she argued with reasoning based on comparison that if Thomas could not deal in groceries because he was so bookish, it naturally followed that peo-

ple engaged in that useful branch of commerce should not consistently lumber up their houses with books. If this did not convince Bascom it delighted him, and he cried out, "Never mind, Helen, we'll fool the Professor yet."

Then he would ask her to recite her latest lesson, and while she declaimed he would rub his hands and beam with pride. "You should hear her," he would say enthusiastically to his friends; "it is better than a show. At a show, you know, you are in for several hours, but at home I can shut off the oratory whenever I have had enough."

As the little girl's intelligence expanded, her admiration for her old friend increased, and it seemed to her that there was nothing in the line of intellectual activity he could not accomplish. In rummaging over his books it had perplexed her to find none with his name as the author, and her wonder increased when he confessed that he had never written a book of any sort.

"And why?" she asked.

"I suppose because I have not found a Mæcenas."

"What's that?" inquired the puzzled child.

"A Mæcenas," replied Thomas, with a smile, "was a mythological creature, paganish of course, that is supposed to have lived two thousand years ago. It was a good-natured sort of animal, that put in its time hunting up worthy people, like me for instance, paying their bills, buying farms for them, and giving them time to write masterpieces without worrying over incidental expenses."

"Was there really any such thing?"

"Well, history says so, but I don't believe it. It doesn't seem natural; it is too good to be true. I think a Mæcenas was just a plain myth, like a centaur or a faun or a satyr, such as I have told you about."

"But if that kind of thing lived then, why don't we have it now?" persisted the child.

"Probably because there is no excuse for it. We could not use Mæcenases

now if we had them, for we have nobody to write masterpieces, and if we had the masterpieces nobody would read them. So you see it would be a waste all around."

"Were women ever those things, Tommy?"

"There have been women who did something in that line, Helen, but I fancy they did not go by that name. At least I have never heard them called Mæcenases. I dare say they were myths, too."

"Then," said the child, firmly, "when I grow up I am going to do something myself. I'm going to be your—you know, Tommy."

And Thomas laughed, but the words of his little friend touched him, for does it not come to every man or woman, struggling with this tough old battle of life, that when the crisis is at hand and all individual effort fails, a Mæcenas, whose arrival has been long delayed, will rise up to save? Is not optimism a general expression of a belief in the coming of the fairy, and is not the optimist he who, taking the buffets of fate

as they may be dealt, lives on serenely in the confident assurance that fortune while lingering cannot escape? Thomas had never formulated any special views along these lines, but in all his life of nearly three score years the question of ultimate failure and poverty had not presented itself. He knew only that this is a very delightful world, a world wherein everybody should be comfortable and happy, with the absolute certainty that in the graciousness of Providence the good angel will appear at the fitting moment. Thomas had acquired this agreeable philosophy by nature; he had not seen the demonstration in any of his books.

Meanwhile he lived his own happy life as it came. Very closely the little girl had crept into his heart, and often he would come from the shop a little earlier in the afternoon, always with the hope that he would find her waiting at the corner, as eager to welcome him as he to see her. He taught her to make slide cases for the old and crumbling books, and as they puttered over the cardboard and the buckram,

the colored papers and the labels, he would tell her the story of each book and how he obtained it, and how much it was to be preferred, even in a tattered state, to the gaudy modern editions. Occasionally his conscience would reproach him as he saw the other children playing in the street, and he would confess how selfish he was to shut her up in a dungeon with an old ogre like himself, and at this she laughed.

And at other times it would come home to him that the children were frolicking at their parties, and enjoying themselves in the manner of childhood, and he would self-sacrificingly urge upon her that it would be her duty very soon to keep up her position in the world and associate more constantly with people of wealth and fashion among whom her paths would lie. But she shook her head obstinately.

"They're not our kind of people, Tommy. We couldn't stand 'em."

THE months have lengthened into years, and the years are flying swiftly, Thomas Ballinger. Your head is whitening and the stoop has come to your shoulders. This boastful young fellow of fifty, whose cheeriness and optimism nothing has been able to daunt, and who dreams that he has drunk from the fountain of perpetual youth, is growing unmistakably old. Those insignificant incidents of human existence, which men call the cares of business, and which you were wont to toss off so lightly, are now arising to plague you. Even the saintlike Hannah, who has so feared and trembled in the past, is stronger and more courageous than you as fresh difficulties come to confront you; her long watching and waiting have taught her that which you, in the downhill of life, are beginning to learn.

But the realization comes slowly, Thomas. Occasional remorse may typify,

but it does not assure conversion. The follies of a lifetime are not to be overcome by a few twinges of rheumatism or the first intimation of a departure of physical strength. You will learn your lesson gradually, Thomas, for you are very frail and human.

"We're in a bad way, Hannah, a bad way," he now began to sigh, repentantly, at each new emergency, for emergencies were happening along with uncomfortable frequency.

"Nay, Thomas," replied his good angel, with the memory of experience, "at the worst, dear, we are in the same old way. Thee must not worry. Remember that it is our good fortune that everything comes out right in the end. Thee must be brave as thee has always been, and we shall soon conquer our troubles."

"I am going to be brave," said Thomas, with another burst of spirit. "More than that I am now going to do something I should have done long ago. At last, Hannah, I think I may tell you with safety

that I have made up my mind to sell my books—at least so many of them as may be necessary to clear up our indebtedness and give us a fresh start in the world. No, do not remonstrate, for on this point I am determined, and I shall listen to no objections. I have dallied too long with my good resolutions, but I thank heaven I can now see my duty clearly. The business has been going wretchedly of late, and you may have noticed that I have been compelled to bring home some of the most valuable articles from my stock. But tomorrow I shall let them go at any price, if only to show you that I have turned over a new leaf, and finally have conquered that foolish sentiment which has kept us in straits so many years."

And Hannah, good old Hannah, who had listened to this song through all the changes of the changing seasons, and had long abandoned expectation of the peace and serenity of life, could not find it in her heart to reproach the fickleness of nature which could bring nothing but renewed disappoint-

ment. She stroked the silvery hair, and smiled her marvelous smile as she replied:

"Thee knows, Thomas, that I have never lost confidence in thy good heart and thy love. Thee has always been the best of husbands to me, dear, and I am content. Whatever thee finds in thy heart to do, that I will accept with joy and gratitude."

"They did well when they named thee Hannah, 'the gracious one,'" said Thomas, and his voice choked, "for thee is gracious and loving beyond man's desert. Trust me once more, old sweetheart, and thee shall see how well thy confidence is repaid."

In the morning Thomas went to the shop with determination written on his face, and with a new and strong desire in his heart. And in the evening he returned with Coleridge's "Sibylline Leaves," the first edition of Kingsley's "Andromeda," and two books from the Vale press. "It was a great day for me!" he called, triumphantly, to Hannah.

Those same years that had brought the

wrinkles and white hairs to Thomas and Hannah had given strength and beauty to the little Helen, for it is the amiable trick of Time to make his compensations and scatter his benefits that the ravages may be forgotten. And Helen, with that proud consciousness of maturing body and mind, the first significant development from childhood, gloried in her advancement, and would stretch herself to her full height, lean her fair young head on the old man's shoulder, and sigh, with the betraying joyousness of youth in her voice, "We are growing old together, Tommy." If Thomas smiled at this pleasant conceit, he still at such times looked back nearly sixty years to the day when he had felt this sunny illusion, and realized how largely, after all, age is a matter of the mind.

The relations between the master and the pupil were broken only by those exigencies which must arise in the life of a young woman who is subject to the demands of a fashionable education. The old friendship was growing rather than diminishing, and

had never wavered since the day when, as Thomas himself expressed it, "she ran into my stomach and my life simultaneously." With much of the old bookman's library she was already familiar, and all that was beautiful in poetry and romance he had commended to her in the theory of saturation, for he had a hearty scorn of those who read by rule and measurement. "If you do not understand everything you read now," he said, "it will come to you by and by. At least some of it will stick, and unconsciously, in reading the best, your taste will be formed for the best. As for general reading," he went on, "my idea is that it is always safe to throw good books in a child's way and let him make his own selection. Advise him or hint to him occasionally, but never make him read a book as a task or a punishment. Let him browse for himself. If a child ever has been ruined or measurably perverted by the time he has spent in a library, or by the influences he has found there, I have never heard of the case."

To all of Thomas's books Helen was welcome whenever he stood by to lock and unlock the famous bookcase, and stand guard lest the precious volumes should take wing and escape. "You are too young," he would reply simply when on these occasions she would smile and jokingly ask if he were afraid to trust her. But in speaking of her he would give vent to all enthusiasm, and encountering Bascom one day he made bold to break forth in this complimentary strain:

"She is a wonderful child, sir. It would gratify you to see how intuitively she takes to the best in literature. And as for a first or a rare edition, I don't believe you could puzzle her in the Congressional Library. If I had possessed such a nose as that when I was her age, Mr. Bascom, I should be the most renowned bibliophile in the world."

And Bascom, who knew as little about a first edition as Thomas himself knew of the fluctuations in the price of sugar, but immensely pleased by any tribute to his child,

shook Thomas warmly by the hand and answered, "She is indeed a wonderful child, Professor." And that evening he sent up to the astonished but gratified Hannah a largess of staples from the town "with Mr. Bascom's compliments."

Thus matters stood when a tremor of excitement running through the neighborhood intimated that something unusual was happening. This proved to be nothing less than the fact of general interest that Miss Helen had arrived at the dignity of sixteen full years. Now, when the daughter of such a man as Stephen Bascom is sixteen years of age, it is a day to celebrate and remember, and it is common justice to the community to admit that the celebration and the remembrance were as universal as the proudest father and mother could desire. The society columns of the daily papers testified to the importance of the anniversary, and a creditable picture of the young woman lent grace and beauty to two columns in the most conservative family journal. There were festivities of a com-

memorative nature in the afternoon with fireworks along the lake front of the Bascom residence at night, and a constant stream of carriages arrived and departed with those who had come to participate in so memorable a function.

And the gifts! It seemed as if the entire city would bankrupt itself in its anxiety to turn the head of one poor helpless girl. Diamonds from father, emeralds from mother, gold baubles and silver trifles from uncles and aunts, jeweled remembrances from classmates, schoolmates, playmates, and every other kind of mate known to a pretty girl—all contributed to impress on Miss Helen the amenities of the rich and fashionable life. Early in the day she had found on the table a clumsily wrapped little package with a letter superscribed in a trembling and uncertain hand. "The best shall be last," she had said, and had carried package and letter to her room and put them carefully away.

But late at night, when the festivities were over, and the guests were gone, and

the happy day was only a recollection, she went back to her room, took out the package and letter, and read:

My Dear Little Helen:

Your Aunt Thou has taken advantage of this joyful occasion to construct for you a wonderful cake similar to that which first won your admiration and our joint love. She has embellished it with sixteen candles, and I am sorry that I am not the archbishop for five minutes, so that I could bless them as piously and earnestly as my heart directs. For my part I have sent a little gift which has been long delayed. It is not an extravagant present, and I could desire that fate or fortune had made me a plutocrat instead of a helpless old bibliophile so that the luster of my offering might shine forth the love I have for you, my dear.

But such as it is I know you will accept it with full appreciation of the affection and confidence it carries, and with the assurance that no one in the world is so capable of employing it intelligently and lovingly as yourself. It means much to me that I am sending it to you, and I wish you to bear in mind that whenever you use it you are fulfilling the predictions of the day you crept into my heart.

And so you are sixteen years old! What shall I say to you that may not seem stiff and commonplace? Shall I tell you how much sunlight and happiness you have brought into my battered old life? Shall I confess how infinitely brighter our cottage has been for your pretty face and cheery voice?

Shall I say that when our little girl is not there even the old den has a dreary and forbidding atmosphere?

No, I shall say nothing of this, for you knew it long ago, you rogue. To-day all your friends in the grand world will crowd about you, and congratulate you, and compliment you, and tell you what a fine girl you are and how all the fairies danced and sang at your birth. How happy it would make me to be able to put on the invisible cap—to be invisible to all but you, my dear—that I might join them and be a silent participant of your happiness.

But since that cannot be, I shall try to fancy that at some moment of the day your thoughts may wander to the cottage and the den and the two old lovers whose hearts are going out to their little sweetheart. And if they do rise before you, like well-behaved and agreeable specters, remember that they are wishing that all the happiness that is worth having, and all the prosperity that is worth striving for, and all the gifts the wisest of the fairies and the gods may shower, may come to their darling Helen.

TOMMY.

And what did Helen do? What any tender-hearted, sympathetic, affectionate young woman of the mature age of sixteen would have done. She kissed the letter, with its small, cramped chirography, went to the window, looked out on the beauty of the night for quite two minutes, put her

pretty head down on her arms resting on the sill—and cried. Then she took up the package, opened it, and cried again.

It was a duplicate key of the old book-case.

THE neighborhood knew that Thomas was in a bad way. Those who had lived in the neighborhood for such time as to make them eligible to the proud position of gossips also knew that being in a bad way was to a certain extent Thomas's normal condition, but Betty had confided to the girl next door, and the girl had communicated to her mistress, and the lady had imparted to Mrs. Colver, and Mrs. Colver had promptly informed the whole seventh precinct of the eighteenth ward that Thomas was in a way which completely eclipsed the most remarkable phenomena of all previously hostile conditions. In short, Thomas was on the verge of a commercial collapse which made the settlement of affairs on the basis of anything on the dollar a financial impossibility. It was noted, and advanced, by the neighbors as a singular coincidence that Thomas with ruin staring him in the face did not differ materially from the Thomas of other

panics; still Diggs, who was employed to do a little friendly and neighborly detective work, reported that a crash was inevitable and that Thomas Ballinger must go out of business.

"The fact," said Diggs, "that Mr. Ballinger has been unconsciously transferring his business to his own house every evening for a number of years will make it easier for him to bear up under the blow, but when a man cannot pay his shop rent or his clerk's wages, or buy stock, it is tolerably safe to assume that something is going to happen."

The neighborhood agreed that this was a perfectly reasonable assumption, and they gossiped over the situation with such persistency that in the very natural course of events the rumors reached Helen, and as Helen was now a young woman nearly seventeen years of age, with plenty of decision and a chin remarkable not merely for its beauty, but also for a shape betokening firmness of character, she did not hesitate but went straightway to her father.

"Father, we must do something for Tommy."

"Why, what's the matter with the Professor?" queried Bascom, laying down his evening paper with his finger between the market reports.

"The matter is that he is too old and feeble to attend to the bookshop business, and we must find something for him to do."

"Of course, if you say so, Helen," replied her father, indulgently. "Let me see. I think I heard yesterday that there is a vacancy in the canned fruit department, and if—"

"What!" interrupted Helen, with fine scorn, "Tommy in the canned fruit department? My dear old Tommy, with that master mind, in the grocery business? Absurd!"

"But, Helen," apologetically explained Bascom, "really the grocery business is not so degrading after you get used to it. It has helped us considerably at one time and another, and—"

"Can you not see, daddy," said the girl,

and she slipped her arm coaxingly around his neck, "that Tommy would be the last man in the world for a position of that kind? He is a wonderful man as we all know, but always with books."

"Oh," replied Bascom, brightening, "I see. Yes, that's very true. We must not forget the books. Well, so long as it's books, suppose you send him down to the store to-morrow and I'll put him in the office. I dare say we'll find something for him on the books."

Helen groaned. "Not that kind of books, daddy dear. I don't believe he could add up a column of figures to save his life; and as for the grocery business, I have heard Aunt Thou say a dozen times he doesn't know whether he is eating carrots or turnips. But there must be something in a great city like this for a brilliant man like Tommy." And the girl's lip quivered.

When a man of the expanding good nature and large heart of Bascom has an only child, and that child at any time shows

evidence of a grief-stricken spirit, with a fair prospect of tears, that man's sole thought for the moment is to restore the balance of happiness. "There, there, Helen," said Bascom, anxiously, "don't cry about it. Of course we'll find something for the Professor. I'll make it the order of the day to attend to it, and here's my word that we'll have him safely anchored to-morrow."

At this crisis in the affairs of Thomas he seemed to be a kindly little man, of that age when all that is combative dies out of the nature, and when the mellowness of time comes so gently to crown the life of eagerness and stress. His face was clean shaven, rather remarkably inclined to roundness considering his years; his hair was stringy and very white, and his eyes were naturally a dullish blue, with now and then the flashes which showed the fire within. His frock coat, usually unbuttoned, hung well down to his knees and exhibited effects of long service and very little personal attention. His trousers

were those of a man of sedentary habits, evidently constructed for a person of dissimilar build, and falling almost in folds over his shoes and around his ankles. His linen was presentable rather than admirable, the collar reaching well up to the chin and surrounded by a stock that mutinied and shifted its position long before the day gave evidence of declining. Taken all in all, and at a cursory glance, he did not appear exactly to bear out the assertion sworn to by Stephen Bascom, that he was a man of a thousand.

Yet, when Stephen Bascom spoke society—commercial, political, and literary—stopped to listen. For Mr. Bascom, whatever may have been his other qualifications, could write his check for a sum considerably in excess of a million, and his word withal was as good as his check. Was it not Bascom, the leading wholesale grocer not only of the city but of the West, who made the Shapleigh Library possible? When the Art Museum fell into dire straits, who first came to the rescue with a proffer

of fifty thousand dollars? Bascom. When the permanent orchestra idea was agitated, who said "Push it along," and sent a large subscription as earnest of good feeling? Bascom. "I don't know a nocturne from a kettle-drum," said this big-hearted Mæcenas, "but if a permanent orchestra is the thing we've got to have it." And when Pohlsen, the art connoisseur, made his annual trip to Europe, who took him aside and said, "Gus, if you see anything over there this town ought to own, pick it up"? Bascom. And so the town waxed fat and prospered mightily, and all through the public spirit and lavish generosity of Bascom.

Sanford, the librarian, was highly honored and not a little flustered when Bascom stepped briskly into his private office and requested five minutes' conversation. Five minutes to a man like Bascom, and just at the busy time of the morning, was a tremendous concession to the market, and Sanford was not slow in appreciating the exigency of the interview. In exactly five

minutes the stenographer opened the door just as Bascom was rising from his chair, and saying:

"As to the salary, Sanford, let that be a secret between us. I suppose the association could allow eight or ten dollars a week, and you know where to send for the rest."

The next day Thomas appeared at the Shapleigh Library, received the news of his appointment to a position of public responsibility in the section devoted to Americana, first editions, and freak books, and expressed his willingness to enter at once upon the arduous duties of that important assignment. His desk was placed in the little alcove just off the grand staircase. The first impressions of those who took a peep at him—and nobody could very well enter the Shapleigh Library without encountering this amiable vision—were that an old bibliophile with more time than occupation had chosen a safe retreat for a quiet hour with a neglected volume or a long-forgotten pamphlet. But the regular

visitor, the man to whom an excursion to the public library is a part of the settled order of the universe, and who would as soon think of going without his breakfast as without his daily conference with the books, always stopped at the head of the stairs, popped his head into the alcove, and with a nod or a smile, said, "Good morning, Mr. Ballinger." Whereupon Thomas turned, rose very dignifiedly from his chair, ran his finger along the page he was reading, shoved his spectacles high on his forehead, bowed with great precision, replying with the most ceremonial courtesy, "Good morning, sir," and without abating his gravity, resumed his sitting and his study.

Notwithstanding the very explicit characterization of Thomas's duties, the precise nature of his labors never bore in very strongly on the public. At ten o'clock every morning he appeared, prompt to the minute, and at four o'clock every afternoon he disappeared, with as little ceremony in the one case as the other. In the intervening hours he sat in the alcove, as re-

lated, poring over a book, from which public service he was diverted only to say "Good morning" or "Good afternoon," or to answer an occasional inquiry concerning a book long out of print, or to settle the question of a first edition. It never occurred to Thomas that he was overworked or underworked; that his position was a burden or a sinecure; that he did not earn his salary or that his compensation was insufficient. In fact, such was the equableness of his temperament, and such the engrossing nature of his literary meditations, that he thought nothing at all about it.

In consideration of the discovery that there were two bookstores and two antique shops, to say nothing of several underground lairs for bibliophiles, between the library and the spot where Thomas took the car for home, Bascom, with that subtle business acumen which had brought him such brilliant success in life, devised that Thomas should draw only a small fraction of his salary, and that the rest should be

intrusted to the custody of Hannah, who could be relied on to see that it was expended in the necessary channels. To this wise arrangement Thomas did not demur. It was to him merely a matter of business detail which was not worth considering, so he dismissed it from his mind. But the habits of life are stronger than even the wisest of us may suspect, and Thomas had been for so many years accustomed to the stress and turmoil of neglected domestic economy that the specter was ever before him. It was true that Hannah no longer confronted him with papers which demanded at least the courtesy of inspection, and that Betty had ceased to give warning; he felt that the one was keeping away from him a burden that he should assume, and he openly accused the other of conspiring to rob his declining years of a gentle irritant. He compared himself to the monk, who having worn a hair shirt for many years, finds that instead of a penance it has become a positive necessity. But Thomas did not

complain persistently of this neglect, though he occasionally confessed that it saddened him to think he was leading, so undeservedly, so luxurious a life.

Now that Bascom had enrolled Thomas in his book of philanthropic endeavor, and had seen the beneficial results of his well-doing, it suggested itself to him that it would be advisable to apply his excellent business principles to further schemes for Thomas's benefit. He had often heard Helen speak of the remarkable literary treasures in the old den, a revelation corroborated by Sanford, the librarian, and he evolved a scheme whereby everybody might be benefited, and Thomas himself the most of all. "The trouble with most of these literary fellows," he argued, "is that they do not treat literature as a commodity. What's the good of a book if it doesn't sell? A man in my line of business would never think of trying to put anything on the market for which there is no demand, or of stocking up with material he can't dispose of, or worse than

that, he doesn't try to dispose of. The whole system is wrong, and when people tell me that this writer died in wretched poverty, and that writer committed suicide, I know he has been handling dead stock. I understand where the trouble lies and I think I can straighten it out."

Accordingly this capable man of business slipped quietly out of his house one evening, went over to the cottage, and informed Hannah that he had come to lay a business proposition before Thomas. Possibly Hannah might have suggested that anything in the line of business might be with more propriety communicated to herself, but she was so overcome by the honor of the unexpected visit that she directed him at once to the den, where Thomas sat, pasting a very yellow letter in a very shabby little book. Bascom's brisk eye took in the entire room, with its bookcases, shelves, pictures, and scattered manuscript.

"You have some fine treasures here, Ballinger."

"Yes," said the old man, with pride in his voice, "they are indeed treasures."

"Do you get anything out of them?"

"Do I get anything out of them?" echoed Thomas, surprised by the question; "I get everything out of them. They have been my companion, my joy, for years."

"Yes, I know, of course, but I don't mean that. Do they bring you in any income? What's the actual return? In short, what do you get on the financial investment?"

Thomas was dazed. He looked at Bascom without replying, and the philanthropist was encouraged to proceed:

"Because," he said, cheerily, and giving Thomas a friendly slap on the shoulder, "I have come over to make you an offer. It's a matter I've been thinking about a good deal lately, and it's a shame that so much material as you have here should not be realizing anything. It isn't business-like, my friend, and you shouldn't do it. Now, I admit that books and all this sort of thing you have here are a little out of my

line, and I may be over or under the mark, but I tell you what I'll do. I'll give you ten thousand dollars for the contents of this room just as it stands. And I'll do it on Helen's judgment. What do you say?"

Thomas looked up quickly. "Did Miss Helen send you over on this errand?" he asked.

"Lord bless you, no! Helen doesn't know a thing about it. To be outright with you, it's a little surprise for her."

The old man appeared somewhat relieved by this information. "It's a little surprise for me as well," he answered, quietly.

"Well, what do you think of it?"

Thomas slowly shook his head.

"Now, as I said," pursued Bascom, "I don't know much about this business, and I dare say I have hit under the mark. We're neighbors and friends, and I don't care to drive a hard bargain or appear mean, so I'll make it fifteen thousand dollars and run my chances. And I don't mind telling you that I intend to make a present of the collection to the library, if

you sell, for I shouldn't know what to do with all this mass of matter in my house if I had it. And we'll call it the Ballinger collection. You see it isn't bringing you in a cent as it lies here. You sell the goods to me for fifteen thousand dollars and I'll invest the money for you at five per cent. That will give you seven hundred and fifty dollars a year, and the books will go to the library where they will be well taken care of. It will be a good thing all around."

Thomas stood up with great dignity. "Mr. Bascom," he said, "I thank you for what you evidently intend as a kindness, mistaken though it is. You have been a good friend and a kind neighbor, and I fully appreciate the value of your interest in me. I am sure that you wish to befriend me now, and I am really glad that you are not a bookman and cannot realize the amazing and preposterous offer you make."

Bascom stared. "Surely," he asked, "you do not mean to say that the offer is

not large enough; that fifteen thousand dollars—"

"I mean to say," interrupted Thomas, "that no offer can be large enough. I am a poor man, Mr. Bascom, and—but what is the use? You would not understand. Let us drop the subject."

"Now, see here, Ballinger," argued Bascom, "you know that I'm not selfish in this matter, and that I'm not out for anything for myself. At the same time, in making this investment, I expect to get somewhere near value received, so it is just a plain matter of business. You must have read these books a hundred times; in fact, my daughter tells me that you know them by heart. So they cannot be of any special use to you in the way of knowledge. I'll own that they are interesting and valuable as curiosities, or first editions, or something like that, but all the same they're a dead loss to you. Better be practical and think it over. With the salary you are now making and this regular income you'll be fixed for life."

But Thomas, still holding up his hands protestingly, kept repeating: "You cannot understand, Mr. Bascom; you cannot understand."

Somewhere from the recesses of Bascom's consciousness it began to dawn that he had blundered, though by the application of every sound business principle he had committed himself to fair and intelligent dealing. A modest and good-natured man was Bascom, and with all the instincts of generosity he reproached only himself for the failure of his mission. But why had he failed? Surely he had made a business-like proposition in a business-like way, and if Ballinger had been a business man—"I'll go home and ask Helen," he said to himself, and bowed his way out with profuse apologies.

Helen listened to his story in amazement. "Surely, father," she cried, "you didn't do that?"

"Didn't do what?" Bascom felt his temper rising. "Bother all this mystery! What have I done? Have I tried to com-

mit burglary or highway robbery because I offered a man fifteen thousand dollars for a lot of old books and tried to make them a source of profit to him instead of a purely dead investment? Am I going to be arrested as a criminal because I tried to help the Professor in what seemed to me a legitimate way?''

''But, father, you do not understand.''

''That's exactly what he said. Of course I don't understand. If I did why should I be worrying over what it all means and coming to you to find out?''

The girl came up to him, put her hands affectionately on his shoulders, and looked him squarely in the face. ''Dear old daddy, let me ask you a question: would you sell me?''

Now, Bascom, who was a lion in a corner on the market or in any sort of business emergency, was a very lamb under the spell of his daughter. ''Of course I wouldn't sell you, Helen,'' he answered; ''though the way things are going nowadays,'' he added, reflectively, ''you may sell yourself.

But that wasn't a fair question. The cases are different."

"No, they are not," persisted Helen. "Can't you see that you are asking Tommy to do that very thing? His books are his children, and they are as dear to him as I hope I am to you. He would no more think of parting with them for money than you of selling me. Dear me," she added, pathetically, "I wish you had not done it."

"So do I now," said the abashed Bascom, "but how was I to know that he felt that way? Who would have supposed that he would have taken a business matter so much to heart, knowing that he was dealing with a business man? I have always thought that books are merchandise, and here I learn that they are human beings. It's a wonder they kept quiet in their cases while I was bargaining with the Professor. What shall I do now? Shall I call him up to-morrow and apologize?"

"No," replied Helen, with a smile, "you leave that to me. You men are so stupid in such things. I wonder what you

would do if you did not have me to smooth over your blunders and keep you straight.''

And Bascom, the mighty Bascom, the ruler of the market, the dictator of corporations, the colossus of finance, withered under this parting shot and crept humbly off to bed.

But Thomas, in the solitude of his den, was gradually, and very perceptibly, recovering from his righteous indignation. He could not conceal from himself the knowledge that he had been insulted, grievously insulted, but the insult was neither malicious nor wanton. In short, it may not have been intentionally an insult —merely a blunder on the part of a man unacquainted with the ethics of the bookish life. For, after all, he reasoned, Bascom was a man of kind heart and charitable proclivities, one who had more than once shown his good feeling; was it not right then to overlook this lapse and refuse to harbor it against him? Did he not distinctly say fifteen thousand dollars? A goodly sum that, and enough to satisfy the

wants of any modest man. The sale of one's library was not to be thought of under any conditions that Thomas could imagine, but fifteen thousand dollars!

He looked about the room. Every picture was in its place, every book was on its shelf, and it seemed to him that they were unusually cheerful and were bowing their acknowledgments of his affection and magnanimous action. He put down the window and sprang the catch. Then he went softly out of the door and locked it. All of which might have been exceedingly annoying to Mr. Stephen Bascom, millionaire and the soul of integrity, could he have witnessed it.

Very quietly down stairs went Thomas, and at each step the thought of the wealth that might be his gave him a sudden jolt and an uncomfortably dizzy feeling. For the stairs creaked dismally and each creak seemed to say: "Fifteen thousand dollars, Thomas! Think of that, Thomas! Think of that!" And Thomas did think of it, and so effectually that when he reached

Hannah's room he was in quite a state of mind for one usually so calm and self-contained.

Hannah was sitting comfortably in her low rocking-chair, disposing of certain accumulations of household interest, when Thomas, whose calls at this hour of the evening were infrequent, entered, drew a chair near her own and said:

"What do you think of fifteen thousand dollars, Hannah?"

Good Hannah had been well brought up in the school of adversity and was not accustomed to give an opinion in a matter involving such magnificence of calculation. Moreover, she had enjoyed much experience with Thomas's system of finance. So she simply smiled and shook her head and answered gravely: "There are some things we must not think about, dear. It is not given to us to worry over matters that are beyond our reach. We should try to take our happiness as it comes, and be content."

"But," persisted Thomas, "suppose

new happiness is within our reach. Suppose it is given to us to concern ourselves with new matters. Suppose that such a sum as I have mentioned could be ours."

Again Hannah shook her head. "Thee must not indulge in such fancies, Thomas. All our expectations are gone with our dear parents who died many years ago. Our friends are kind, but their little store is nothing to us. Do not speculate wildly, dear. Be satisfied with the fortune heaven has sent us."

"To be satisfied is one thing," replied Thomas, "and to take new happiness is another." Then leaning over with the tenderness of speech and action so irresistible to the old Hannah, he said: "Thy father was right, sweetheart; I am but an ill mate for any woman, and I have proved but a sorry husband to thee."

The tears sprang to the old wife's eyes. "Nay, Thomas, how often must I protest how good thee is, and what a lifelong comfort thy love and tenderness have been.

Thee shall not reproach thyself with such unworthy thoughts."

"I shall reproach myself no longer," cried Thomas. "Listen, Hannah. We shall be rich beyond all the hopes and expectations of youth, rich beyond my power of telling. Every wish of thine shall be gratified and every promise I made fulfilled."

"Thee is dreaming, Thomas. Do not delude thyself with such idle hopes."

"I am not dreaming, Hannah. Long ago I thought it all out, and now I see the way to make my boasting good. We shall be rich, rich, Hannah. And first of all thee shall have the changes in the cottage thee has so long desired."

"Thomas!"

"And thee shall dress according to thy station and thy beauty, old sweetheart. Thee shall have everything to accord with thy new position, even perhaps a carriage."

"Thomas!"

The old bookman walked the floor in his growing excitement. "Oh it is a happy

moment for me that I can stand here and think of the pleasures that are coming to us. We shall go back to the old home, Hannah, where we first played together, and over the sunny scenes of our childhood. Do you remember the little parsonage, Hannah? Do you recall how the honeysuckle and the clematis climbed over the porch, and how those beautiful hills looked down on the valley? Have you forgotten how often we followed the little brook up the mountain road and sat at the spring, and how we talked of what we would do when we were old enough to go out into the great world? And don't you remember the last time we were there together, Hannah, and what I said? Did I not promise that go where we might I should one day bring you back to that happy place? And I shall keep my word, Hannah, for it has all come true."

"Thomas!" Hannah rose and put her hand soothingly on the old man's arm. "I am frightened to hear thee talk so wildly. What is this fortune which so

moves thee? What unexpected chance has come into our life that we shall have all this luxury?''

At Hannah's touch Thomas started. He looked into those gentle eyes, and a sudden wave of recollection rushed over him. But the exultation had not quite died out of his voice as, dropping his head, he said:

''I refused fifteen thousand dollars for the books to-night.''

DISQUIETING rumors pervaded the neighborhood. Strange men with evil faces and evident malevolent intentions had been seen at various times hovering near the little cottage, scrutinizing it front and back, measuring distances with the tape, and jotting down mysterious conclusions in small books. Their replies to the natural demands as to their business were evasive, and this merely added to the general alarm and suspicion. The intercommunication of the domestics failed to solve the problem; even Mrs. Colver admitted that she was wholly baffled, and as a last resort the services of Diggs were demanded, as a neighborly duty, to get at the bottom of the plot, for that it was nothing short of a plot the neighborhood was fully convinced. Diggs was too excellent a neighbor and too distinguished a sleuth to fail in such a crisis, and in a period of time that would have been impossible to anybody save one at the head of his pro-

fession he was able to report that much property on the street had been quietly bought up, and that it was the purpose to erect an apartment building that would swallow not only the Ballinger cottage but several houses and lots adjoining.

To say that consternation and wrath prevailed at this unprecedented outrage would mildly convey the feelings of the community. At once it was pronounced unworthy of belief. Surely no man or company would dare profane so quiet and reputable a street—a street renowned not only for its general air of domesticity, but for its proximity to the Bascom estate. Disclaiming all idea of reflecting on the professional dignity and ability of Diggs, scouts, male and female, scurried in all directions to get such particulars as would discredit the report and restore the normal harmony, when just at the crisis of Diggs's reputation, Thomas's landlord appeared at the cottage, confirmed the dismal tidings, and requested Thomas to prepare to vacate the following spring.

It may have been gathered that such a man as Thomas was not easily moved by emergencies. That the word "emergency" had even a place in his lexicon the continuous record of his life disproved. True, trifles had arisen at one time and another to disturb the household and temporarily disarrange the domestic machinery. Payments had been necessarily suspended, creditors had become importunate, and there had been occasionally some idle talk of legal proceedings, but affairs had always adjusted themselves properly in the end, and that which gave indications of a storm turned out nothing more serious than a slight and inconsequential interruption. Thomas had returned to his library after these unsettled periods as tranquil as when he emerged, satisfied that this is a very easy-going world and that it is injurious to correct living to magnify trifles. The thought that at any time a serious calamity might threaten, by which he might be separated from his books or his home, probably never occurred to him. If it had entered

his mind his optimistic nature would have dismissed it as a bugaboo, not worthy to interfere with more important literary occupation.

To the proposition involving the transfer of his library for the consideration of fifteen thousand dollars Thomas had not alluded since the evening it preyed so heavily on his mind, and whether he had forgotten it entirely or thought of it only as a dream he gave no intimation. Hannah had never referred to the subject, presumably considering it a mere emotion of the moment, and Bascom was too disconcerted by the enormity of his own offense to tempt another rebuke. Yet those who were near to the old bibliophile noticed the change that had come over him. Usually preoccupied and inattentive, save when books were the subject of discourse, his preoccupation had settled into almost complete mental abstraction; his cheerfulness had given way to long spells of melancholy, and when it fully dawned upon him that the little cottage could be his home no longer, he

seemed suddenly to lose all heart and hope and to become the child in action that throughout his life he had been in purpose.

None was quicker to observe this change than Helen, whose accumulation of nearly twenty years and sympathetic association with the bookman aided her keen perceptions. Very anxiously she had watched Thomas as he grew older and feebler, and only she could draw him out of himself and kindle a spark of the old enthusiasm. He sent for her when the knowledge of his crowning disaster came full upon him, and she, hastening to the den, found him standing at the window looking mournfully out upon the great lake. Since he did not hear her step coming up behind him, she paused, hesitating to break in upon his revery. Still he gave no sign of a knowledge of her presence, so she came lightly forward, and putting her arm around him and her head on his shoulder, began to quote softly and in a tone of infinite tenderness:

"'Musing alone on the shore, and watching the wash of the billows
Round the base of the rock, and the sparkle and flash of the sunshine,
Like the spirit of God, moving visibly over the waters.'"

And Thomas, still gazing out upon the blue surface of the lake, and gently pressing the hand at his side, took up the suggestion of the poem and repeated:

"'Must I relinquish it all, the joy, the hope, the illusion?
Was it for this I have loved, and waited, and worshiped in silence?'"

Then he said very quietly: "It was good of you to come, little girl, but I knew you would. You and I have stood so many times at this window, and I felt that I could not speak to anybody of parting until we together had said the first good by."

"But, Tommy," pleaded Helen, "you are speaking so wildly. There is no occasion to say good by. Nothing has happened as yet to make you despondent. Things are as they always were."

"It was all my fault. I heedlessly

cherished the joy, the hope, the illusion, from which nothing could come. I lived in the summer of happiness. My home was our playground, Helen, my books our playthings. And now—"

"And now," interrupted the girl with a gayety that was plainly forced, "things are going to be very much as they have always been. Do you think that this window is the only spot in the city that commands a view of the Gurnet and the reef and the other places we have delighted in all these years? Do you think there is no other room so pleasant and attractive as this, where books may be kept and studies may be followed?"

"But it has been my home," replied the old man, bewildered by the sudden questions.

"Of course it has been your home, and it is still your home, and for all we know now it may be your home forever."

"Do you really believe that?" asked Thomas, with a childish eagerness that brought the girl's heart to her throat. "It

seems to me that I could never know another home. I could never accustom myself to any other surroundings. The lake would not be the same lake. A den, however luxurious, could not take the place of this den. Even could I have my books they would not be content with strange quarters and unaccustomed places.''

''And this,'' said Helen, in the same gentle tone of raillery, and turning away her face that he might not see the compassion there, ''is my brave Tommy, who was brought up among the Concord philosophers. This is the strong teacher who tried to make me self-reliant and courageous, and who showed me the beauties of the philosophy he taught. Have you forgotten your Emerson already, Tommy? Have you forgotten what you and he told me? 'Let us build to the Beautiful Necessity, which makes man brave in believing that he cannot shun a danger that is appointed, nor incur one that is not.' ''

''I am not brave,'' sighed the old bookman, ''and I am not strong. I know that

I have failed miserably, and that I have the heart of a coward. And why," he added, querulously, "is the Beautiful Necessity that I should leave my home? Mr. Emerson was never put to that test. Perhaps if he had been he would not have expressed himself so philosophically."

"Don't say that," said Helen, gently. "Don't shatter all my ideals, Tommy."

"But it is true," replied Thomas, still nursing his wounds. "It is very easy to talk and write philosophy, and to smile at the Beautiful Necessity when the Beautiful Necessity exists only in your imagination. But even Seneca weakened when the test came."

"Very well, then," said the girl, "I see that I must prove that in your case it is only a question of the imagination." And she smiled as she added: "You must promise me, Tommy, that you will not try to imitate Seneca."

Thomas was not proof against the influence of this cheerfulness, and already he was ashamed of the weakness he had be-

trayed. "We shall open no veins in this house, Helen," he said, with a touch of his old lightness. "I shall try to make up in philosophy what I lack in blood. And even with you to cheer me, dear, I shall need them both."

Decision, as has been shown, was not the least of Helen Bascom's virtues. No sooner had she reached her home than she went straight to her father and said, without any preliminary fencing:

"Father, something must be done for Tommy."

"What, again? What's the matter with the Professor now?"

Bascom's tone was that of mild surprise and gentle interest, but Helen was too absorbed in her own affair to stop to analyze his emotions. "He is in deep trouble," said she.

"It seems to me," mused Bascom, "that the Professor is always in trouble. He has a perfect genius for it. I don't believe I ever knew a man who so rioted in trouble as the Professor. This comes

of bringing up a man without a business education. Now, when I—"

"Yes, father, I know," interrupted the girl, "but you are not the one in question. You are never in trouble, except when I trouble you, and I am afraid I am going to do that right now. Father," she continued, rather explosively, "did you ever hear of Mæcenas?"

"H-m," said Bascom, with an inflection which might have been construed either affirmatively or negatively; Bascom was too sharp a business man to commit himself unadvisedly.

"For whether you have or not," went on the girl, "I am going to be a Mæcenas —with your help and approval, of course," she added diplomatically.

"O, of course," replied Bascom, "I could not think of letting you do anything without my help. Thank you very much; it is so good of you to think of me."

Helen ignored the fatherly satire and proceeded to project a little of her own, first taking the precaution to administer a

daughterly kiss where it would be most effective. "It seems to me, daddy," she said, "that I remember that once when a deputation from a hospital board came to wait on a generous man of my acquaintance to thank him for a large subscription, I heard him say that it is not merely the duty but the rare pleasure of those who are blessed with wealth to give freely to and help those who are unfortunate."

"The exact words," laughed Bascom, "and a fair hit, Helen. I acknowledge it. So you think we must help the Professor?"

Helen's association with Thomas had imbued her somewhat with his roundabout methods. She plumped herself into her father's lap, and stroked his face for several minutes without replying. Then she said abruptly:

"You think me a very superior sort of girl, don't you, daddy dear?"

Bascom was too entranced to answer, but he nodded blissfully.

"And do you remember how proud you were that day in school when the principal

in his address to the scholars attributed a quotation to the wrong author and I corrected him?''

Bascom remembered the incident, though to do his business education full justice he did not recall the quotation.

''Do you remember also when the rector said that he was glad to see one young woman in his parish who was fond of reading, and who cared little for frivolous society?''

Bascom nodded again, for he had a famous memory for everything that concerned his child.

Then Helen came to the point. ''I cannot forget all that you and mother have done for me,'' she said, reaching up to kiss her father, ''for no girl ever had better or kinder parents. But do you know, daddy, I can't help thinking—I am sure, that much that is best and truest in me is due to Tommy. When you thought I was playing with the children, he was my teacher in the little den that was my school-room. He has been my companion

and guide ever since I was a little girl. It was Tommy who taught me to love the things that are beautiful in life. And to think that my dear old Tommy is in trouble!"

The girl was weeping, and Bascom was gulping furiously. "Who says the Professor is in trouble?" he demanded, sternly. "He may think he is in trouble, but that proves nothing. Ask your mother. She has been looking into the practical side of Christian Science lately, and she knows that there is no such thing as trouble. It is purely a matter of the imagination."

"But I think I am in trouble, daddy, and you will help me?"

"Of course I'll help you. But no more offers to buy that library. I have had enough of that business. If it is anything in the way of a foreign mission or a place in the diplomatic service, or the county ticket, I'll do what I can."

Helen shook her head. "It is nothing of that sort, daddy; it is much easier than that. Let me think it over for a day or

two, and then I'll let you into my secret—our secret."

Mrs. Bascom swept imperiously into the room. "What are you two muttering and hobnobbing about?" she asked, rather fiercely. Christian Science had not soothed all the asperities of Mrs. Bascom's bristling nature, or eradicated all the germs of aggressiveness from her disposition.

"We were just giving a wayward old and invalid friend of ours a little absent treatment," replied Bascom, slyly punching his daughter. And Helen smiled through her tears.

That night Thomas Ballinger stirred in his sleep. He was dreaming that he was sinking, sinking, sinking into a black and terrible quagmire, and something all in white, and with the face of an angel, rustled by, and raised him up, and carried him off to a garden where flowers were blooming and birds were singing.

WHEN the good fairies assembled at the birth of Helen Bascom, as they are bound to do in compliment to all princesses, native and foreign, they vied with one another in eagerness to contribute the best of their gifts. "I will give her wealth," said one. "And I beauty," said another. "And I health and spirits," chimed in a third. And so they lavished their offerings, adding intelligence, wit, goodness, until it seemed that the poor infant must pass away under the accumulation of so many blessings. But when they had finished, the eldest of the fairies, who had not yet spoken, smiled upon the others and signified that she would be pleased to address the convocation.

"I think I may say, my dear sisters," she began, "that this dear child is starting in life under peculiarly brilliant auspices, and that you have done what you can to make her at least superficially attractive.

It would appear that there is very little left for me to suggest, and I really feel a delicacy in venturing to add anything as a complement to your work. However, I have reserved my gift for the last, and fortunately, for I perceive that with the responsibility of your donations she will need it, I will give her common sense.''

Now, the only child of a millionaire father and a worldly mother needs nothing quite so much as the patronage of the eldest of the fairies, and it may be that had this wise and estimable spirit not been present at the conference, the narrative of the haps and mishaps of Thomas Ballinger never would have been written. Common sense is an extremely valuable contribution to the fairy dower of any young woman, and when to that is added the quality of determination which should accompany it, it may be suspected that a girl child has been born to some purpose.

Bascom had made up his mind that the twentieth anniversary of the merry meeting specified should be celebrated with all

the splendor and hilarity commensurate with so important an event, but to this Miss Helen interposed a positive objection. "No more brass-band parties for me," she said. "We had noise enough four years ago, and that we outlived it is no reason why we should tempt Providence a second time." Bascom looked pained. He admitted that there might have been certain worldly features which could be dispensed with, but as a patriotic American citizen, he was loth to surrender the idea of fireworks in the evening. Your true American is a firm believer in the efficacy of rockets and Roman candles as the relief for a surcharge of enthusiasm, and Bascom, as may have been conveyed, was a true American.

Miss Helen was obstinate, but when she saw the cloud come over her father's face, and listened to his argument for pyrotechnics, she drew him aside and said, coaxingly: "Let me have my way just for once, daddy, and we'll have a celebration that will make it the happiest day of my life." And Bascom, who was the kind-

est, and therefore the weakest, of all fathers, consented to let her have her way "just for once."

Twenty years may bring many changes, Thomas Ballinger, if Father Time is inexorable. It is not enough that babies may grow to manhood and womanhood, that youth may advance to middle age, that middle age may decline into senility; death may reap a gloomy harvest in twenty years if the fates are unkind and the gods are indifferent. And again there are double decades when Father Time moves gently, however swiftly, when his scythe remains upon his shoulder as he passes through the neighborhood, and when he touches lightly those who have not incurred his displeasure. This was once a part of your philosophy, Thomas Ballinger.

They are all with you, Thomas, when the curtain goes up on the last act of the comedy. The little girl, who first amused you in your playhouse of books—here she is, a woman grown, just as beautiful and just as true as a younger and more ardent

lover might have wished! And Hannah, patient, noble old Hannah, still bearing her cross of faded hopes and disappointed hungerings with a meekness which glorifies the white crown upon her head! And Betty, loyal, faithful, impulsive, scorning alike both years and trouble! And Bascom, rounder and rosier as the cycles fly, the complete exemplar of a solid business man! And Mrs. Colver, full of information and the beginning of wisdom! And Diggs, the Nestor of detectives, the great, the glorious, the international Diggs! Father Time has considered them as he has gone up and down the earth, and has spared them!

And you, Thomas Ballinger, what have you to show for these years of opportunity? When the great books are made up and the reckoning comes, what will be written down to your credit? To all appearances you are a broken man, a feeble, tottering old man, with a life of misused purpose behind and a year or two of anxious waiting and dread to come. Where is that

philosophy which sustained you when you were young and vigorous and intent only on the ease of the present? What has become of that temporal weakness, which is sometimes called optimism, that cheered and deceived you because you were young and strong enough to believe in fallacies and phantoms? Do ghosts come from the bookcases to comfort you, Thomas? Do they help you in misfortune? Do they aid you in trouble?

Yet Father Time has not neglected you, Thomas Ballinger. He was with you in your youth, and when you were visionary and fanciful He accompanied you when you roamed aimlessly east and west. He walked with you in all your days of madness, and perhaps he chided you and warned you, for Time is a great mentor if only you will listen. And he is still stalking behind you, with his scythe upon his shoulder, but if you strain your ears you will hear him say, "Not yet."

For Father Time has been a teacher to you, Thomas, and if you have learned too

late for your advancement the lesson he imparted, the fruits of that teaching are to be seen in your humility, your gentleness, your silent confession of your error, your effort to bear bravely whatever sorrow the future may have in store. He has transformed you from a recluse, a dreamer, a selfish, yes, a selfish pleasure-seeker, into a repentant, gentle, lovable old man. Time has been lenient with you, Thomas Ballinger.

When Helen Bascom announced that her birthday party would assume the proportions of a small and select picnic in the country, Mrs. Bascom came as near taking to her bed as the condition of so vigorous and forceful a woman would permit. And when the wilful young lady supplemented this crushing information with the further intelligence that the guests would be confined to Thomas and Hannah and one or two others of that irreproachable but humble set, Mrs. Bascom rebelled outright. "This comes," she said, scornfully, "of associating with nobodies. If you and

Helen," she continued, addressing Bascom, who listened deferentially, "choose to put in a day accumulating ants and spiders, that is your privilege; as for me, I shall remain at home where I can find better company of all classes."

"The Major is not in a frame of mind to add to the gayety of the occasion," whispered Bascom to his daughter, "and perhaps it is just as well that she does not grace the festivities with her presence. But we shall get along somehow."

In justice to Mrs. Bascom it is to be admitted that a picnic, never a very exhilarating function under the most favorable conditions, would naturally lack spontaneous merriment when conducted in the interest of two such sedate personages as the Ballingers. And although the place of revelry was Bascom's farm, not many miles distant from the city, and although Bascom exerted himself to the utmost in exhibiting the wonders of his estate, he would have confessed, on compulsion, that it was a good deal like work, however

noble the cause. Thomas had obtained leave of absence for the day, and as he had certain hazy and indefinite ideas as to the programme at picnics, and in order to be on the safe side, he had provided himself with two or three books wherewith to replenish his mind as he stretched out under a tree, oblivious of any obligation that might rest upon him as a member of the party.

To add to the perplexity of the function Bascom, who was in a most unintelligible flow of spirits, behaved in a most mysterious manner. He would wander up to Thomas with no apparent purpose, poke him in the side, and ask, "How are you coming on, Ballinger?" and then go off into silent convulsions of merriment. He would steal over to Helen, point to the unconscious old man buried in his reading, and shake his sides with excess of mirth. In vain Helen reproved this unseemly levity and expostulated with her sire for his giddiness; reproof merely brought forth another explosion, the more inexplicable

because Bascom, while a kindly and genial gentleman, was not known to the community as an example of sustained hilarity. The climax was reached shortly after dinner when a telegram came recalling Helen to the city. Now, there was no apparent reason why such a calamity should excite glee, but no sooner had the telegram been delivered and read to the sorrowing party than Bascom, unable to control himself, laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks. Surely never was so eccentric a person as Bascom.

The departure of Helen, which was attended with many expressions of polite regret, did not appear to exercise a restraining influence on her father, who passed the afternoon in a condition of boyish excitement quite reprehensible and inexcusable in a man of his age. He ran back and forth, from one person to another, indulging in remarkable innuendoes which nobody seemed to understand, and pumping poor Thomas with questions of so irrelevant a nature that the worthy old man

looked at him in grieved astonishment. Even on the train returning to the city Bascom's hilarious mood did not diminish, but in fact increased to such an extent that had he not been recognized as a man of the most correct habits, a good deal of natural suspicion might have been excited. Altogether it was fortunate that Mrs. Bascom had withdrawn herself from the party; that circumspect woman could not have borne with patience the extraordinary antics of this most extraordinary man, Bascom.

When they reached the city surprising things began to happen. It was strange that Bascom's carriage should be found just large enough to hold the entire party with the exception of Thomas. It was strange that Bascom, usually the kindest and most considerate of men, should suggest to Thomas, his guest, that he might go home on the surface cars, and it was wholly incomprehensible that when this inhospitable suggestion was made, it was accompanied by a chuckle that was plainly

out of place. It was strange that when Thomas reached the corner of his street he ran against Helen in the most accidental way, and it was positively remarkable how many of the neighbors were standing on their porches as they walked along, bowing and smiling and showing evidences of unusual interest.

A shrewder man than you, Thomas Ballinger, would have suspected something long ago. These smiles and chuckles, these unaccustomed happenings, this chain of coincidences would have given rise to mistrust in a mind not dulled by seclusion, with perceptions blunted by long intercourse with musty books. It was the fault of your education, Thomas, the glaring mental deficiency of one shut out from the keen and observing activity of the commercial world. Bascom was surely right when he said that business is the thing to develop a man's faculties, to make him alert and able to cope with the snares and deceits of life.

Had you possessed the ordinary appre-

hension of a business man, Thomas, you would have pricked up your ears when Mrs. Colver spoke of burglars as you passed her house, laughing as she said the words. You would have smiled when you found your front door open and the trace of muddy boots on the porch. You would have winked knowingly when you saw the paper in the hall scratched and torn, and the woodwork defaced. You would not have rushed so wildly up the stairs and into the den, and you would not have staggered against the wall at the sight you there beheld.

Gone! Devastation, and irreparable ruin! Not a picture on the walls, not a book on the shelves, not a paper or scrap of writing on the tables! Worse and worse, not a shelf, not a table, not a book-case to be seen! Oh, the vandals that could desecrate so holy a spot!

What happy chance was it, Thomas, as you hurried back to the street, that you found Diggs, of all men, waiting at the door? Admirable Diggs! Prince of de-

tectives! No need of telling the news to Diggs, for did he not combine with his wonderful power of tracing criminals the ability to guess at their infamous operations and be promptly on the spot? Few men like Diggs!

"Don't be discouraged, Mr. Ballinger," said this great man; "we'll find the rascals and recover the plunder. See! here's a clue to start with. Here are the heavy tracks of a large wagon right in front of the door. That was the wagon that carried away the goods. What are we to do? Why, just follow the tracks until they stop." And Diggs smiled amiably in recognition of his own cleverness. Incomparable Diggs! Where is there another detective who would have picked up a clue so easily?

And off they scampered, with Diggs in front, and his nose close to the ground as if trailing the scent. But go as fast as he might, he found it difficult to keep ahead of Thomas, whose white face and set mouth argued ill for the thieves when he

encountered them. Down the street they rushed, now to the right, now to the left, then through a narrow lane, until Diggs, who kept close watch of the wagon tracks, pulled up with a shout.

"Well, blow me, if here isn't a nerve! The rascals have carted the goods right through Mr. Bascom's place!"

They took up the scent again, now closely followed by Helen, who spoke encouragingly to Thomas and sought to cheer him with repeated assurances that the rogues must be near at hand. And they wound around the terrace and up by the garden until the tracks stopped directly in front of a dwelling newly built and freshly painted.

If you had not been the dullest of men, Thomas Ballinger, you would have recognized at a glance the little cottage exactly like your own, with your favorite vines climbing up and around the porch, and the bushes growing in the yard. If you had stopped to reason or to think, if you had not run into the doorway, through the hall,

and up the stairs, with Diggs and Helen at your heels, you would have marveled how wonderfully like surrounding objects were to the home you had just deserted. But you never were an observing man, Thomas.

An so they arrived in procession at the top of the house, and lo! here was the den, and here the bookcase, books, papers, and pictures just as Thomas had left them ten hours before, in perfect order and safe and sound down to the smallest autograph. Exhausted by his race, bewildered and overcome by sudden joy, Thomas fell into a chair—his same old chair, in the familiar position by the table and near the lamp—and his head sank on his breast. A shout aroused him, and here in the doorway stood Bascom, holding his sides and roaring out his gratification. And good old Hannah, with her apron at her eyes, and on her face the sunshine and tears of an April day. And Betty, clapping her hands with the enthusiasm of a child, and almost ready, in her excitement, to give notice.

And even Mrs. Bascom, composed but evidently relenting, and struggling between well-defined ideas of decorum and womanly compassion.

"As an officer of the law," said Diggs, with a prefatory cough, "I have tried to do my duty, but I am now put to the painful necessity of naming the criminal. Mr. Bascom, I hate to do it but I must arrest your daughter."

Then there was more laughing, with hand-clapping, and Bascom gave alarming signs of impending apoplexy. But Helen, her face radiant with happiness, and glistening with the tears that always come with a woman's great joy, knelt down by the side of the arm-chair, and took the old man's hands, still trembling, in her own and pressed them against her cheek, and said, hardly loud enough for the others to hear:

"Can't you understand, Tommy? Don't you know what anniversary this is? Have you forgotten that I am twenty years old to-day, and don't you see this is father's present to us—to you and me, Tommy,

and to Aunt Thou? We are all going to live here, dear old Tommy, the rest of our days, and our troubles are over and our good times have come to stay."

And Bascom, noisy, big-hearted, impatient Bascom, who had recovered his voice and who abhorred tears when everybody should be smiling, roared out, "Come; now that we understand one another, let's go downstairs and celebrate. If we can't have fireworks, we can at least have dinner."

Downstairs they went, Hannah still drying her eyes, and Thomas shaking and clinging to Helen like the old child he was. And Betty—deceitful, untrustworthy Betty—had prepared a great feast and brought it on in state while Thomas and Hannah, hand in hand, walked about the room, pausing delightedly before each new but familiar object, and taking notice of the improvements so long desired. And there was much eating, and there was likewise great merriment, and Bascom made a mighty speech in which the fine old fellow

thanked everybody in the room for permitting him in his humble way to do a bit of good in the world and to add to the sum of human pleasure. And if he inconsistently blubbered now and then after the strain of the day, who will rise up to reproach him?

But while the others were still feasting and making merry, Thomas and Helen stole away and climbed the stairs to the little den where the new life was beginning in the old way. And the girl drew Thomas to the window and pointed to the waters of the lake, rippling and shimmering in the moonlight.

"Look, Tommy! there's the Gurnet, just as we saw it in the former home. And there's the reef of Norman's Woe with the breakers beyond. And see, Tommy! there goes the northern boat with its lights and shining decks. That's our Mayflower, dear. Don't you remember—

'O strong hearts and true! not one went back in the Mayflower!
No, not one looked back, who had set his hand to the ploughing.'

That's how we have set our hand, but it is easy ploughing now, Tommy, and all our work hereafter is the harvest."

Then Thomas tried to speak, but his voice failed him, and all he could say was, "My little girl."

"You know, Tommy," she went on gayly, "I told you I was going to be your Mæcenas, and I have simply kept my word. If I had known how simple and pleasant it is I think I should have begun long ago."

"It is all so strange, so sudden," said the old man, brokenly, "and I have been so unworthy. What have I done that this should come to me?"

"What have you done? You, who led me day after day through a land of enchantment and into kingdoms which otherwise I never might have known? You, who developed the best that was in me? You, who taught me nothing that was not beautiful, everything that was helpful and noble? And you ask me what you have done?"

"That was for my own pleasure; it cost me nothing more than a little selfish exertion. But compared with this—"

"See, Tommy," interrupted the girl, gently, and turning toward the water, "the moon is shining on the reef—just as you shone on my poor reef of a mind," she added, with a little smile. And when he started to speak again, and to thank her, she put her hand over his lips and laid her head on his shoulder.

"Don't, Tommy dear; it was such a little thing."

Thomas lay back in his arm-chair near the table. Wearied by the excitement of the day, and the tax upon his strength, by the rush of happiness and the last hour of communion with his books, he closed his eyes. And it seemed to him at that moment that he heard a faint whispering, then a rustling, then a pattering as of many feet, and languidly looking, he saw the pictures on queer little legs clambering down from the walls, and through the open

doors of the old bookcase the books piling one over another in their haste to reach the floor. And as he looked in his wonder he saw his chair suddenly surrounded by these sprites, shaking their thin, spider-like arms, and nodding their weird heads. And he heard a voice like the squeaking of a doll, which said:

"Ho, Thomas Ballinger, where have you hidden her? What have you done with her that you would keep her away from us? A pretty fellow you, Thomas! Have you thanked her for yourself? Have you shown any appreciation or gratitude? Have you told her how deeply we feel our debt to her? It may be that you would have sold us and scattered us—you who pretend to be so loyal, so steadfast, so devoted to our interests—if she had not come to the rescue. A nice idea of decency you have, Thomas. Tell us where she is that we may go to her and atone with our gratitude for your thoughtlessness and neglect."

Then Thomas, in his confusion, lowered his eyes, but when he heard a scampering

and a noise like far-off shouting he looked again, and he saw across the room a fair young girl, smiling and blushing and raising her hands protestingly to the little gnomes who surrounded her. And as they joined their elfish hands and danced in their glee and murmured their thanks and crooned their praises, she protested the more, now with tears in place of smiles, and—was it she or the memory of a voice that exclaimed:

"It was such a little thing!"

And it further seemed to Thomas that amid the rejoicing and the confusion he was suddenly spirited away. And he found himself wandering in a soft and pleasant land, where flowers were in profusion and nature was luxuriant. The woman at his side was young, and happiness was in her eyes, and great hope in her heart. On they roamed, over wide rivers and up and down high mountains and across deserts of sand, he ever pulling and urging the forward course, she patiently enduring and suffering the restless flight. And though

her strength was nearly spent, and the years had aged and stricken her, though her garments were in tatters and her feet were bleeding, still she went on uncomplainingly. And there came another word to Thomas: "Greater love hath no man than this."

But when the old man, overcome by shame and penitence, would have cried out, mountains, rivers, desert, pain, and suffering vanished, and there fell upon him an influence of infinite rest and tenderness. And looking for the third time before he should give himself wholly to the spell, he felt the kiss upon his forehead, and saw the quiet eyes, and heard the loving voice of the faithful one:

"Thee'd better come to bed, Thomas."

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